

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

September 5, 1999

FREE AT LAST?

**James
North
Returns
to the New
South
Africa**

**PLUS:
Laura Flanders
and Philip
Connors
on the
Pacifica
Crisis**



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The Rich and the Rest of Us

Congress, euphoric after sniffing too many budget surplus projections, almost certainly will cut taxes this year. The questions are how much and for whom? But for anyone whose income isn't in the top tier, there will be little to celebrate, no matter what the outcome.

The Republican crusade for tax cuts of nearly \$800 billion over 10 years is partly geared toward next year's elections. The Democrats are sufficiently scared of the tax bogeyman that different factions are offering smaller cuts. Both parties, however, are politically off-key with the electorate, even if they are tuned into the most critical constituency of American politics—big campaign donors. Indeed, according to a *Wall Street Journal* poll, most Americans want any budget surplus in the coming years that is not devoted to preserving Social Security and Medicare to be spent on education, health care and defense (55 percent), not on a tax cut (34 percent). Despite what the tax-cutters claim, people want to spend "their money" on the commonweal, not a blowout at the mall.

Beyond the political calculations, however, a big tax cut, even in Clinton's \$300 billion range, is a bad idea. First, the timing is wrong. By current projections, there will be a small surplus in the budget (apart from Social Security) starting next year. The tax cut plans, however, are largely based on projections of a surplus of \$1 trillion (apart from Social Security) over the next decade. But judging from past experience, over the next five years those surplus "guesstimates" could be off by as much as \$250 billion.

In addition, a global economic crisis that could drag down the U.S. economy looms as a real possibility. A big tax cut also could push the Federal Reserve to cool down the economy by raising interest rates, undermining any measly tax cuts for the average family. The government should run surpluses now, when the economy is near full employment, and deficits when unemployment rises. For now, it would be far better to have in place a smaller tax cut plan that could be implemented quickly in case of an economic downturn.

Furthermore, the surplus projections assume that Congress will abide by caps on discretionary spending, which include everything from the military and environmental protection to Head Start and highways. Over the past two decades, discretionary spending has been cut sharply as a percentage of GDP. With renewed clamor for more military spending, the "surplus" thus reflects continued drastic cuts in real, inflation-adjusted money for research, infrastructure, education, health or other citizen needs. Without such cuts, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculates, there will be at best a \$112 billion surplus available over the next decade.

But even beyond preserving existing programs, new public spending is needed if we are to improve the quality of life for all, create conditions for continued economic growth and reduce the rough injustices of American life. It's absurd to talk about massive tax cuts when conservatives are arguing that the country can't afford to cover drugs under Medicare, when the national parks are falling apart and when inequities in access to education, job training and technology are growing.

In recent decades, the distribution of both wealth and income has become dramatically more inequitable. These tax cuts would simply widen the gulf between the rich and the rest of us. Republican proposals—especially cuts in income and capital gains tax rates, the estate tax and the alternative minimum tax—overwhelmingly benefit the rich. The plan approved in the House would give two-thirds of all tax benefits to the richest 10 percent of taxpayers (and 45 percent of benefits to just the top 1 percent), according to Citizens for Tax Justice, but only 9 percent of the cuts would go to the bottom 60 percent. While the average tax cut for families earning less than \$38,000 (the bottom 60 percent) would be only \$174, the average for households in the top percentile (incomes over \$300,000) would be \$54,027. The Senate plan is only slightly less regressive.

Though it may be politically unfashionable, the tax system should be used to share the wealth society produces more fairly.

Though it may be politically unfashionable to say so, the tax system should be used to share the wealth society produces more fairly. This is an ideological battle. Republicans hate government—apart from police, prisons and the military—and their plan is another battering ram aimed at the very idea of public action. The worst effects of these plans would explode in the second decade, when especially regressive measures would double the tax cuts to two trillion dollars.

In the '80s, President Reagan cut taxes and then ran deficits as a clever squeeze play to make it more difficult for Democrats to defend government programs. Discretionary, non-defense spending as a percentage of GDP is already at its lowest point since 1962, and growing smaller. The ill-founded Republican tax cuts would stymie new government initiatives for at least another two decades. That would be a disaster. To paraphrase the Republican theme of the moment: It's the people's government. It's time to give it back to them.

David Moberg

Letters

Ehrenreich On and Off

Barbara Ehrenreich gets kudos for her analysis of Hillary Clinton's campaign for the New York Senate seat ("Run Home, Hillary," July 11). Ehrenreich zeroed in on the problem not being the First Lady's carpet-bagging, but that, native or alien, she will add so little to the state or Senate. The only up note might be that she could defeat the egregious Rudy Giuliani, a contest that gives credence to the "better of the two evils" vote. That shows how bad off we are.

Just as we elected Al D'Amato to the Senate in 1986 because Jacob Javits solipsistically entered the race and drained votes away from Elizabeth Holtzman, Hillary Clinton's running will deny us a chance to put a true progressive in the upper chamber—Rep. Nita Lowey.

It gets worse. The 2000 election may set the dubious record for having the lowest turnout in our history. Faced with a Gore, a Bush and a Clinton, boredom will be thick enough to cut with a knife.

Don Sloan
New York

It was a relief to read Barbara Ehrenreich's column about Hillary's apparent run for the Senate. How her health care sellout to the insurance companies came to be touted by liberals bewilders me as much as how Bill's war on children was proclaimed "welfare reform."

Why couldn't Hillary at least run someplace where her opponent would be to her right? How about North Carolina!

Steve Juniper
Berkeley, Calif.

That was a catty article by Barbara Ehrenreich concerning the candidacy of Hillary Clinton for senator of New York. Ehrenreich's claws are really showing—long and sharp!

R.Thomas Myers
Kent, Ohio

Heresy

I am sick and tired of the gratuitous and erroneous Cuba bashing that has become standard fare among some "left" publications. In an otherwise interesting book review by Joel Bleifuss of a collection of Cuban short stories called *Dream with No Name: Contemporary Fiction from Cuba*, the reviewer ends by damning the stories because there is no indication that "Cuba is a police state, albeit of a softer tropical variety" ("Summer Reading," July 11). Furthermore, he criticizes the stories for not referring to the "voices of those dissident revolutionaries" reporting on "the absurdities of life in contemporary Cuba held captive by the follies of its leaders."

Cuba is not a police state. The so-called dissidents are no more than a handful of persons with little support or visibility. Cubans are not held captive by their leaders but are collectively struggling to overcome the 40 years of U.S. warfare against their country.

Harry Targ
West Lafayette, Ind.

Misplaced Sympathy

I read Barbara Ransby's "Guilty of Motherhood" on the Web (July 11). Did the print version of this opinion piece show a photo of Tyler Walrond in the

week before his death? I'd guess not. No woman who is a mother could look at that infant and justify the actions of his mother, who did not seek immediate medical attention. Hasn't Tabitha Walrond heard of the emergency room?

Let's not hold Walrond up as a victim. She was no "conscientious" mother. Her baby was a skeleton. That's why a racially mixed jury took just over two hours to convict. I challenge you to post the autopsy pictures of that infant and then see how many women jump to the picket lines in defense of Walrond. Maybe she doesn't deserve prison, but she certainly doesn't deserve sympathy. Tyler does.

What an insult to the black mothers Ransby is so rightly worried about. The vast majority of black mothers do what is best for their kids. We should be organizing on behalf of them, not Walrond.

Pamela O'Connell
Port Washington, N.Y.

Correction

Due to an editing error, the magazine printed the wrong wage increases for IBP meatpacking workers in "Welcome to the Jungle" (Aug. 22). The new contract raised wages by \$1.57 an hour over five years for slaughter department workers, and \$1.82 an hour for processing workers. We regret the error.

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SYLVIA

By Nicole Hollander

The woman
who's easily
annoyed feels
that it's time
for "Social-
Action Barbie."

NOW THAT
THERE'S MAJOR
LEAGUE BARBIE,
NASCAR BARBIE
AND WNBA
BARBIE...



WHEN CAN WE expect to
see GUN-CONTROL BARBIE?
SHE'LL NEED LOTS OF OUTFITS
FOR HER CONGRESSIONAL
APPEARANCES OR FOR
INFILTRATING THE N.R.A.
SHE COULD HAVE A
LITTLE PICKET SIGN
PAINTING KIT WITH
TINY PAINTBRUSHES...

OR A SHIP
AND CREW
FOR ACTIVISM
ON THE HIGH
SEAS.

2-4 Nicole Hollander

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Barak's Big Tent

By Charmaine Seitz

JERUSALEM

Now that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has finished the preliminaries—a big welcome in Washington, a cautious first meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and talks with world leaders—he must move on to the real business of running his government. That, it seems, may be a very difficult job.

Barak took his time to shape a broad government coalition—a group that includes ideological rivals like the secular left Meretz Party and the settlement-supporting National Religious Party (NRP). There is one thing, however, that all of Barak's coalition partners have in common: They are all Jewish Zionists.

When Barak promised on election night to be "everyone's prime minister," he clearly wasn't speaking to the Arab citizens that make up nearly 20 percent of the Israeli population and voted resoundingly for him. Barak did not even negotiate with the Arab-Israeli parties. "If he thinks he can throw us away after we've done the dirty work, then we can show him a thing or two," says Ahmed Tibi, one of the 10 Arabs in the Israeli Knesset.

In an effort to appease the irate Arab leadership, Barak has appointed Knesset member Hashem Mahmeed as the first Arab-Israeli to sit on the sensitive Knesset defense committee. As a result, right-wing lawmakers have threatened to boycott the committee's sessions.

Can a government with such strong differences hold itself together? "I'm not so sure," says Israeli scholar Avraham Diskin, who fears that parties with such a distaste for each other will never get along. "Meretz is one very clear anti-clerical party that is now sitting with all three religious parties." Barak's job will be making all of those divergent parties happy.

When it comes to Israeli settlements, Barak is taking up where his right-wing predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, left off. He has continued to allow the building of settlements and the demolition of illegally built

Arab housing, both of which, Palestinians say, defy international law. A recent study by Peace Now shows that 29 new Israeli settlements—many of which consist of makeshift trailers set up illegally under cover of night—were started since the signing of the Wye agreement last October. Barak has promised his coalition that these sites will not be abandoned.

While he continues these hard-line policies, Barak is promoting himself as a man of peace. Judging from the \$4 billion goodwill package presented by the Clinton administration during Barak's visit to Washington, the United States doesn't mind if he maintains the policies of Netanyahu, as long as he appears to be cooperative. While Palestinians may get frustrated with Barak's dual messages, as long as the United States is happy, they will be powerless to change things.

Barak's position became more clear in recent weeks during his meetings with the Palestinians. One of his main demands is postponing the partial troop withdrawal from the West Bank outlined in the Wye accord. Barak

says this is necessary to prevent angry West Bank Israeli settlers from sabotaging future talks. In exchange for postponement, he offered the Palestinians humanitarian gestures—VIP passes to Jerusalem, additional permits for Palestinian workers in Israel and an increase in the number of trucks allowed to pass at the Gaza-Israel crossing.

Palestinians call the offer "insulting." Commentator Ghassan Khatib says Barak is forcing them to accept "a series of compromises on compromises" that ultimately lowers their expectations in hopes of Israeli reciprocation, which rarely comes.

Barak insists that if Arafat rejects his proposal, he will implement Wye "to the letter." Until then, Barak is making good use of the hawks in his government, whom he says he cannot anger. If the Palestinians can be convinced to wait, Barak would win himself an extra card to play in final status talks.

Meanwhile, the Arab parties and the hard-line Likud are watching from the sidelines. If one flank of Barak's coalition walks out, one of these outsiders may be willing to take its place, in return for a cabinet position. Juggling this coalition may provide Barak with the tools he needs to bring concessions from the Palestinians, but it will be a full-time job. ■



Casino King

By Ira Shorr

WASHINGTON

When it comes to getting its way with Congress, the gambling industry has left nothing to chance, filling Republican and Democratic campaign coffers in a concerted effort to avoid government scrutiny and regulations.

"The Republicans talk about moving people from welfare to work and then they promote something that takes away people's paychecks," says Tom Grey, executive director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling (NCALG). "The Democrats say they're for poor people—but they're helping take money away from them."

During the '90s, casinos, lotteries and off-track betting sites have proliferated wildly and their returns are astounding. Non-Indian casino gambling brings in estimated revenues that are four times that of the American movie industry, four times that of all spectator sports and twice that of all recorded music.

At the same time, gambling industry contributions to federal election campaigns (in the form of soft money, PACs and individual donations) have increased by 447 percent. From 1995 to 1998, casino interests contributed \$4.23 million to the three national Republican Party committees and \$2.29 million to Democratic committees.

Not so coincidentally, Trent Lott's ascension to the rank of Senate majority leader in June 1996 came in the middle of the gambling industry boom. According to a recent report by Public Citizen, the consumer interest organization founded by Ralph Nader in 1971, Lott's National Republican Senatorial Committee received \$1.68 million in soft money from casino interests from 1995 to 1998—40 percent of the soft money received by the Republicans during that period.

What did casino gambling get for its money? Breathing room. In March 1996, the industry was jolted when the House voted to create a commission to assess gambling's impact and to recommend new regulations. While Congress was debating the commission, the

Republican Party received \$1.78 million in soft money contributions from casino gambling interests. Public Citizen found that Lott—then majority whip—contributed significantly to the "defanging" of the commission by ensuring that casino executives would never be forced to testify before Congress about their business practices.

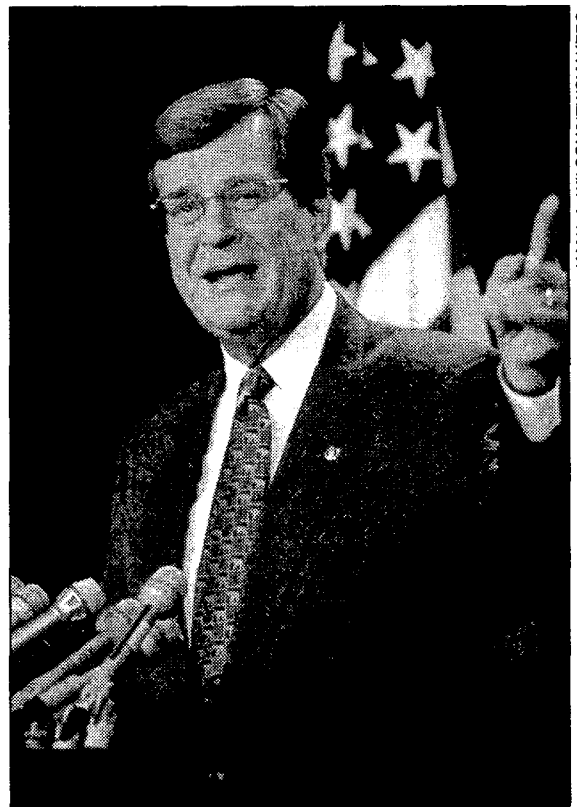
Lott also helped avoid a debate on a 1998 measure that would have eliminated federal tax deductions for gambling losses. Supporters of the proposal noted that the deduction put the government in the position of subsidizing gambling. Lott worked with Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota—a recipient of \$49,000 in gambling industry money from 1993 to 1998—to make sure the bill never made it to the floor.

Although Lott has been extremely discreet in his efforts to support the casino industry, there's been nothing quiet about the gambling boom in his home state. Riverboat gambling came to Mississippi in 1992, and by the end of 1997 the state had 29 casinos. While producing tax dollars and jobs, gambling has brought along more than its share of problems. A May 1998 poll cited by Public Citizen showed that two-thirds of Mississippi's Gulf Coast residents expressed "concern" over the "effects of development on the environment" and "their quality of life."

It was such concern that spurred the the Army and the EPA to call for an environmental impact assessment of casino development on the Mississippi coast. Lott worked diligently to kill the assessment, accusing the Army Corps of Engineers of "shutting down economic opportunities along the coast." Lott aide Stan Harris spread rumors

that EPA and Army officials spearheading the environmental assessment were "in cahoots with local environmentalists." The environmental impact assessment was dropped.

Of course, Lott is not the only politician friendly with the casino lobby. Democrats and Republicans alike scramble for gambling dollars. But the greatest hypocrites are those, like Lott, who support the gambling industry while publicly espousing "family values." The NCALG cites studies showing that gambling attracts crime and victimizes the poor, who spend the largest percentage of their incomes at casinos.



The Senate's big winner.

As for being good for the economy, the Florida Office of Planning and Budgeting has concluded that the costs of gambling addiction far outweigh government revenues that might be generated from casinos. And, of course, there is the political corruption stemming from massive campaign contributions. "The financial incentives for Lott's actions are clear," says Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook. "And they undermine public confidence in our democracy." ■

Hoffa's Report Card

By Jane Slaughter

DETROIT

Five months into the new regime at Teamsters headquarters, it's not too soon to assess President James Hoffa's performance at the helm. Hoffa already has overseen bargaining of three national contracts and called a strike against a crucial organizing target. In doing so, he has set about dismantling what his predecessor Ron Carey called "the New Teamsters"—inciting anger and defiance from many members, even among some of his supporters.

Over the past two decades, the struggle for the soul of the Teamsters has been led by the reform movement Teamsters for a Democratic Union. TDU roused thousands of Teamsters to transform their union into a vehicle for fighting the boss instead of a get-rich-quick scheme for fat-cat officials. TDU won over even more members when Carey was in power from 1992 to 1997. The most visible evidence of a (partially) reformed union was the victorious UPS strike in August 1997. But there were many other initiatives, from a caravan campaign against NAFTA to an organizing drive among immigrant apple workers.

Times have changed. Secretary-Treasurer Tom Keegel flaunted the officialdom's new attitude when he spoke to a June gathering of 500 leaders in Las Vegas: "TDU, kiss my ass. We're taking our union back!"

Hoffa is winding down the union's most important organizing drive. He has thrown into trusteeship two locals where his allies faced opposition from TDU members. He has restored the practice of meeting with employers at cushy resorts; his fellow slate members accept multiple salaries from various union bodies. And national contracts at Anheuser-Busch and Northwest Airlines face strong, organized resistance from both rank and filers and local officials.

Hoffa has a ready explanation for his troubles: Ron Carey. According to union spokesman Chip Roth, Hoffa inherited bad situations from the previous administration, to which he is now applying "common sense solutions." To Hoffa's supporters, a prime example of Carey's

bad legacy is the organizing drive at Overnite, the nation's largest nonunion trucking company, based in Richmond, Va. Carey began a large-scale drive there in 1994. Since then, 38 trucking terminals—about 40 percent of Overnite's 8,200 workers—either have voted for union representation or are under government orders to bargain with the union. "We inherited a campaign that was dead," Roth says. "The union hadn't organized a new member in two years."

Carey, however, has been out of power since November 1997, when he was removed by a government monitor after a campaign money scandal. It wasn't until December 1998 that the union held an election to replace Carey, which Hoffa won. In the interim, Tom Sever, the acting president, provided no direction.

Hoffa has promised to balance the union's budget. So, rather than regear for a renewed organizing drive at Overnite, the union will try to negotiate a contract for those already signed up. In July, Hoffa pulled a five-day unfair labor practices strike at 11 terminals to scare management into negotiations. It was a bold move, but no substitute for solid support from a majority of the work force. "The union isn't strong enough to force Overnite into a contract that will attract more workers," says TDU organizer Ken Paff. "For that you need a longer strategy. We're afraid Hoffa has decided to end the drive, and blame the workers and Carey when he does."

In other industries, too, Hoffa's policy has been to wrap up the battles, achieving stability for both management and union officials. Anheuser-Busch's 8,000 Teamsters gave Hoffa 80 percent of their votes last year on the strength of his pledge to make their contract a top priority. Now many workers are incensed that Hoffa has asked them to vote again

on a deal they've twice rejected. The offer would eliminate "past practice"—working conditions long recognized but not officially part of the contract—and give the company more flexibility to outsource and use temps. The only change: This time, the agreement would last six years instead of five.

Hoffa's 1998 campaign slogan was "Restore the Power." But he is offering Anheuser-Busch workers only two options: accept the contract or lose a long strike. "There is nothing more that can be won at the table," he wrote to members, raising the possibility that Anheuser-Busch would "starve our members into submission."

Opponents of the contract proposed to restore Teamsters' power with a new contract campaign and a boycott of Budweiser, building support for a strike. Hoffa ignored them. Now most local officials are pushing members to reject Hoffa's offer.

At profitable Northwest Airlines, flight attendants who have gone without a pay raise for 10 years have been organizing an outspoken contract campaign over the last 14 months. The 11,000-member local brought in TDU to

help design the program and train organizers. Their strike vote carried by 99 percent, with a 94 percent turnout; and in last year's election, flight attendants voted against Hoffa by 87 percent.

Now activists are watching their mobilizing efforts being frittered away at the table. Last year, union negotiators said their aim was to raise industry standards on pensions. Now, they say they can only negotiate within industry standards, even if that means a pension of \$1,650 a month for a 30-year retiree. Union reps have told unhappy members that if they want a livable retirement, they should marry a pilot. More than 1,300 attendants have signed a letter urging rejection of Northwest's offer and a return to the table.

As at Anheuser-Busch, Hoffa's method for selling the contract is to tell



STEPHEN JAFFE/AP

Is Hoffa restoring the power?

members their drive is weak. His mailing warns that Northwest might not be profitable in the future and that members could end up with even less. Danny Campbell, the local's secretary-treasurer, disagrees. "With the stake they've bought in Continental," he says, "there is no way Northwest is going to be anything but lucrative."

Teamsters who transport new cars from factories to dealerships ratified a national contract by 80 percent in July. But the contract's puny wage gains (averaging 1.9 percent per year over four years) were described by the *Wall Street Journal* and the American Trucking Association as a victory for employers. Pension improvements were only slightly better than in the much weaker freight industry. With auto sales booming, carhauling is very lucrative. And, with 90 percent of the haulers unionized, the industry would have been vulnerable to union pressure

for a better package. Again, Hoffa bypassed members' potential strength in favor of a quick settlement.

A drive to recruit 15,000 immigrant workers in Washington had targeted the state's two largest apple processing companies. After intense, illegal opposition from management, this year the union won a court order for the right to bargain if a majority of workers sign union cards. But the union may not be able to take advantage of this breakthrough: Hoffa replaced the organizers who had worked on the campaign with his own loyalists.

While Hoffa seeks peace between labor and management, he makes war on dissent within the union. In a Texas local of airline mechanics, members became dissatisfied with poor representation under local President J.D. Potter, a former Hoffa running mate. They circulated a petition for Potter's resignation and, in an election for regional vice-

president, voted 3 to 2 for TDU leader Doug Mims. A week later, Hoffa put the local under trusteeship.

And in Wallula, Wash., a Hoffa vice-president forced 1,300 meatpacking workers to end their strike and take a concessionary contract. Shop floor leaders, all TDU members, were favored to take over the local from Hoffa-backed incumbents in this fall's election. Hoffa imposed trusteeship there as well.

Roth says Hoffa's most important achievement is his work toward reuniting the union. But as these recent rebellions show, this is wishful thinking. "What you'll notice is never an option for Hoffa in a tough situation is trying to rebuild the members' power," Paff says. "It will be interesting to see when he stops blaming Ron Carey for his flops."

The movement to remake the nation's largest union is not over yet. ■



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

Tough Luck, Buddy 7.9

Clinton's legal defense team has gotten a reprieve in one of the stranger legal actions against the president: a libel suit filed by Egyptian lawyer Mohammed Baddy—who claimed he had been ridiculed by others because his name was similar to that of the president's dog, Buddy. According to *USA Today*, Baddy was asking for \$5 million for all the "mental anguish" he had suffered because of the dog's name. An Egyptian court dismissed the suit, noting that it had no jurisdiction over dog-naming practices in the United States.

A Thug's Life 8.3

Don't dismiss England's rabid football fans as mindless thugs. According to a recent report by that country's National Criminal Intelligence Service, the infamous brick-and-bottle-of-urine-throwing football hooligans are getting organized with the help of wireless

technology and the Internet. "Far from being 'mindless,' they are well organized and adept at exploiting spontaneous situations," London's *Daily Telegraph* quoted from the report. "Away from the grounds and with activities planned and communicated using mobile phones, pagers and the Internet, the hooligans remain a menace."

Death With Dignity 7.5

Why just bury your loved ones in the ground—when you can blow them up instead? The Neptune Society of Northern California, a fast-growing, forward-thinking cremation company, now offers customers the option of having their loved one's remains blown up as part of a festive fireworks display, packing the ashes in fireworks shells launched into the heavens from a barge in San Francisco Bay. "It's really kind of special," a company spokeswoman told Reuters.

Given the company's obvious flair for

publicity, is it any surprise that it just went public, hoping to send its stock soaring along with your dead relative's remains? "In nearly three decades as a private death-care company, Neptune has developed a proven system to effectively market and deliver cremation services," the company explains on its Web site (www.neptunesociety.com). "The compa-



ny is poised to take advantage of the dramatic increase in the trend toward cremation as a simpler, dignified and more economic alternative to conventional burial services."

TERRY LABAN

Home Sweet Home

By Jeffrey St. Clair

Tori Woodard and Patrick Diehl, the most prominent environmentalists in the small town of Escalante, Utah, spent Saturday, July 17 watching the local Pioneer Days parade. But they were dumbstruck when they saw one of the floats: an effigy of an environmentalist stuck to the front of a truck, as if he had been run over. Later,



JERRY SINTZ/BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Inside Escalante National Monument

the dummy was moved around town in a garbage can. When Woodard and Diehl returned home, they found their house had been shot with paintballs, the windows and doors had been broken, beer bottles had been thrown inside the house, their phone lines had been cut and blood was on the floor.

Two weeks earlier they had faced similar threats. At a July 5 Wise Use rally against the new Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Wade Barney, a bishop in the Mormon Church, called for a war against environmentalists. Woodard and Diehl had shown up to protest the event. Barney pointed at them during his speech and shouted, "Our people have lived here for more than 100 years. Now you want to come in and make it so we can't enjoy it.

This is a religious war: Christians against the exclusionists!"

After the rally, Woodard and Diehl returned home to find their windows broken and threatening messages on their answering machine. "We are the only people in town right now who are outspoken about these issues," Woodard says, "and you can see why."

Another speaker at the rally was Myron Carter, vice president of Escalante People for the USA, a local Wise Use group. Carter now says it was wrong for people to vandalize Woodard and Diehl's home. But he admits he doesn't like having them in his town. "I don't care for their beliefs," Carter says. "And I don't particularly want them here."

Woodard and Diehl have been vocal in their support for increased wilderness protection in this desert region north of the Grand Canyon. Created in 1996, the 1.9-million-acre monument is one of the wildest regions in the Southwest, a landscape of sandstone canyons and remote mesas that is home to cougars, rattlers and northern goshawk. Much of the anger against the monument plan has to do with a proposal to close roads to motorized vehicles. The Escalante region has long been a favored playground for dirt bikes and off-road vehicles, which, over the decades, have shredded the fragile desert soils.

But the roads issue may be a red herring of sorts. The pressing economic interest in the area involves oil and coal. Escalante is believed to contain one of the largest coal deposits in North America and Conoco recently has sunk exploratory oil wells across the region. But because of the area's remoteness, the coal and oil reserves have remained largely untapped.

Woodard called on Barney to cool his rhetoric and renounce violence in the wake of the attacks. "The church should take a stand on the vandalism," Woodard says, "and encourage the bishop not to say stuff like that. There are 1,000 people here [in Escalante] and only 175 are non-Mormon. What he says has a big influence."

But Barney won't budge. He claims that Woodard and Diehl trashed their own home. "That's the kind of people they are," he says.

Even if his followers are responsible for the vandalism, Barney suggests that the couple got what they deserved. "We had this demonstration and they showed up to protest it," he says. "Come on now, they asked for it. They're lucky that they're still in as good shape as they are. Anyplace else and they wouldn't have fared nearly as well." ■

Etc.

Shutting Down the SOA?

The \$12.7 billion foreign aid bill that passed the House on Aug. 4 included one big surprise: the first-ever funding cut for the School of the Americas. The amendment, sponsored by Massachusetts Democrat Joe Moakley, passed by a vote of 230 to 197—with 58 Republicans voting in its favor. The vote marked the first political victory for human rights and church groups since protests began over a decade ago against the Fort Benning, Ga., Army facility.

"Put simply, the School of the Americas has trained some of the most brutal assassins, some of the cruelest dictators and some of the worst abusers of human rights the Western Hemisphere has ever seen," Moakley said in a public statement. "If we don't stand for human rights down in Georgia, how can we expect to promote them anywhere else in the world?"

The amendment would eliminate funds for training foreign officers, effectively closing down the school. Unfortunately, it probably won't survive the upcoming negotiations to iron out differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The Senate package, passed on June 20, did not include the cuts.

At the same time, both the Senate and House measures were littered with plenty of Republican dirty tricks. Anti-choice crusader Christopher Smith (R-N.J.) tacked on an amendment to the House bill barring funds for family planning to foreign governments and international organizations that support abortion rights. Smith called U.S. support for contraception "cultural imperialism."

Both the House and the Senate also slashed funding for such "pork barrels" as the U.N. World Heritage Fund, the U.S. Biosphere Program and the Peace Corps.

Kristin Kolb

Pacifica Imperiled?

Perhaps you've heard there's trouble at Pacifica—the 50-year-old, listener-supported radio network. In March, Pacifica's national management dismissed the popular station manager at Berkeley station KPFA and fired two programmers for breaking the network's ban on discussing internal affairs on-air. Someone fired shots through Pacifica's windows, and a standoff followed without negotiations. On July 13, managers hauled a reporter from the studio for breaking policy, interrupting a live broadcast. Massive protests and scores of arrests ensued. Pacifica padlocked the station, “for security reasons,” and hired armed guards with union-busting expertise to keep paid staffers out. Then came thousands-strong demonstrations, a solidarity concert, a labor speak-out and a lawsuit. Seventeen California legislators proposed auditing Pacifica's tax-exempt status, and San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown joined a chorus of progressive leaders calling for the resignation of Mary Frances Berry, the chairwoman of Pacifica's governing board.

Interviewed in July, Berry said the situation was painful, but changes—which include altering Pacifica's bylaws so that local advisers may no longer sit on the executive of the national governing board—were well intentioned. Pacifica needs to broaden its listenership and “diversify” its audience, she says, and to professionalize, making management more accountable. Taking her at her word, and looking beyond the drama at Berkeley, here's how the plan has played out.

On the listenership front, when management locked union members and volunteers out of KPFA they didn't just abandon their Berkeley listeners—the folks whose gifts pay Pacifica's bills—they also imperiled their contact with audiences nationwide. Engineers at KPFA normally supervise the distribution of programming to some 70 stations via Pacifica's satellite. The tricky technology was sold to affiliates last year as an alternative to the one operated by National Public Radio. When management rebuffed a devoted KPFA technician's offer to maintain the system during the crisis, they seriously impaired the service.

Dozens of stations experienced problems receiving Pacifica's daily shows—*Democracy Now!* (DN!) and *Pacifica Network News* (PNN) as well as the whole lineup Pacifica syndicates, including the mediawatch program *CounterSpin*, NACLA's *Our Americas* and *This Way*



Out, a gay and lesbian magazine. In some places, those programs are what diversify the airwaves. Facing suddenly empty air time, some affiliates began to comment that they need a new network they can trust. So much for increasing listenership.

As for accountability, national programmers—of which I am one—have seen their work arbitrarily censored and edited by Pacifica management and station staff. In Washington, WPFW's staff cut headlines and stories about Pacifica from PNN, and aired shortened shows complete with credits, leaving the impression that producers were ignoring the story (even as management was talking to commercial media). WPFW pulled *CounterSpin* without notice because it addressed Pacifica affairs. Program director Lou Hankins told me, “We're not putting that garbage on our air.”

On July 14, DN! was pulled for the same reason at the Washington and Los Angeles stations. D.C. listeners heard WPFW switch to music mid-show, but Hankins told the *Washington Post*'s Frank Ahrens that he'd aired DN! in full, “front to back.” Censoring the Pacifica news is a direct violation of what Berry said publicly in June—that it was the board's understanding that Pacifica programmers would cover the story.

Still, Lynn Chadwick, Pacifica's executive director, forbade the July 14 DN! program from being put on Pacifica's Web site even though she was interviewed on the show. Visitors find a statement from

the site's host: “Web Active cannot provide its visitors with *Democracy Now!* if Pacifica does not provide the broadcasts.”

That same week, PNN and DN! producers were shocked by a plan to put the L.A. and D.C. station managers—who've been most aggressive about censorship—in charge of national programming. Berry says the plan is canceled, but there has been nothing in writing and every reason for doubt.

As for professionalism, Working Assets, the telephone company that gathers donations for nonprofit groups, thinks Pacifica's current management can't be trusted with money. Working Assets members supported Pacifica to the tune of some \$60,000 a few years back. Witnessing the escalating crisis, President Michael Kieschnick took Pacifica off the 1999 donor-ballot, after he wrote twice to Chadwick requesting a meeting and she failed to reply. “We couldn't be sure the money would be well used,” Kieschnick says. Some fear Pacifica plans to commercialize. Kieschnick observes, “They've done the opposite—lost their only commercial funder.”

On July 28, Berry announced KPFA would reopen, promising producers would be “free” to say what they liked. Inside, the

“We're not putting that garbage on our air.”

staff found their workplace showered in glass. Those hired to board up the station had driven bolts right through the windowpanes. As *In These Times* went to press, Pacifica's guards are still barring staff from KPFA's transmitter. “We're free to clean up,” says news director Mark Meracle, “but we can't broadcast.” Chadwick says the power will be transferred soon.

Perhaps it will all turn around. I don't see how, with the current management in place. No worker enjoys airing bad news about the precious network she loves, but we at Pacifica are charged with sharing information. We need a noncommercial network run by managers who care to reinvigorate, not embarrass, the listeners and broadcasters they serve. ■

Golden Passports

Euripides Matos was planning to visit family in his native Dominican Republic, so he went to the Dominican Consulate in Midtown Manhattan recently to apply for a new passport, only to leave the piece fuming. "This is a holdup," he said on the way out.

Matos had just discovered what has outraged New York City's 600,000 Dominicans for years: How their own consulate fleeces its countrymen on a daily basis. A passport obtained through New York's Dominican Consulate costs an astonishing \$200, making it among the most expensive in the world.

The same passport, good for six years, can be obtained back in the Dominican Republic for \$40. It even can be bought for less at Dominican consulates in Miami (\$173) or Boston (\$187). A U.S. passport, by comparison, costs \$65 and is good for 10 years. The second-most expensive in Latin America, Ecuador's, costs half as much—\$103 for six years. And the passports of several other Latin countries can be purchased for \$40 or less.

On top of prohibitive passport prices, the Dominican Consulate extracts an arcane array of fees from its nationals for just about every service imaginable. The fees rake in as much as \$70,000 a day, according to consular records in my possession and interviews with former employees. They add up to a bonanza of several million dollars a year collected from some of the city's poorest residents, most of it in cash.

This revenue is then divided between the Dominican government of President Leonel Fernandez and the local consulate, which Dominican law allows to keep 25 percent for operating expenses. Predictably, the job of consul general in New York has been that country's most prized political plum, second only to the presidency itself. But the current consul general, Bienvenido Perez, a one-time hotel porter, has taken neocolonial capitalism to new levels. Through a series of add-on fees, he has milked his people beyond all decency.

Consider the example of Edwin Batista. After 30 years as an immigrant worker in this country, Batista was about to retire and was planning to move back to his native Santo Domingo. He went to the consulate to take care of paperwork for shipping an automobile home.



He was shocked to learn that he not only had to pay a hefty customs duty on the car when it got to there, but also owed \$138 for "consular fees." Included in those fees were \$40 for a consular form, \$20 for one of Perez's employees to fill it out and \$78 for it to be notarized. "They're getting rich off people here," Batista said.

As Batista was speaking, Ramon Perez emerged from the consulate. He just had paid \$110 for a simple power-of-attorney form so his wife back in the Dominican Republic could transfer money out of a bank account he keeps there.

"They don't think how hard people here have to work for this money," he said.

Want to send your child back to stay with her grandmother while school is out during the summer? It will cost you \$65 for a notarized "parental authorization" form if the child is to return to New York in the company of a relative or friend. While many Latin American countries require the same notarized form to guard against illegal adoptions or kidnappings, most, like Guatemala and Colombia, charge nothing for it, while a few countries, like Ecuador, charge a \$30 fee.

Even other Dominican consulates in this country charge less for the same parental form. It costs \$35 in Boston's

consulate and \$40 in Miami's. "Of all the complaints I get," says City Councilman Guillermo Linares of Manhattan, "the biggest volume come from parents who want to send their children back home and find that on top of airfare, they have to pay for that special permission to send them."

Even the dead don't escape the consulate's clutches. Say you want to ship the body of a relative home for burial. On top of the funeral home's expenses, the consulate will charge you \$75 to translate the New York-issued death certificate into Spanish, and another \$75 to notarize the translation.

Consul General Perez has tried to justify the gamut of fees, noting that many of them existed before the current government took power. But people expected a change when the young, reform-minded Fernandez became president. Instead, several fees have increased. "What government doesn't charge taxes?" Perez says. "You can come in here and get a passport in an hour or an hour and a half. You can't get a U.S. passport that fast."

Through a series of add-on fees, the Dominican Consulate has milked its people beyond all decency. Even the dead don't escape its clutches.

Besides, the money goes toward an important cause, Perez says. He employs 88 people at the New York consulate, and they have to be paid—presumably so they can collect more fees.

Perez concedes, however, that President Fernandez has been listening to the growing outcry from fellow countrymen in the diaspora. Next month, just in time for the start of a new presidential election campaign, the government will reduce Dominican passport prices by \$50, making them only 50 percent costlier than any other in Latin America. ■

Juan Gonzalez is a columnist for the New York Daily News.

Cancer for Sale



FERNANDA GIANNASI

By Jim Young

Thirty years since the lid was blown off industry's cover-up of asbestos hazards, most Americans are familiar with the slow death associated with what was once called the "magic mineral." Less well known is that Canada, our environmentally sensitive neighbor to the north, is the world's number one asbestos exporter—and is now spearheading a fierce campaign to fight international efforts to ban its product.

Since new use of asbestos has almost disappeared in the United States and other industrialized countries because of government regulation and market pressures, the main target of Canada's drive has been developing countries. Indeed, seven of Canada's top 10 markets are in the Third World. Canadian mine owners—backed by the federal government and the Asbestos Institute, a nonprofit industry group—are peddling their deadly product largely to countries like Thailand, Korea and India, where the powerful heat-resistance and binding properties of asbestos are valued in the production of low-cost building materials, as well as automobile brake linings and textiles. Critics fear the epidemic of illness and death that has plagued the West will be repeated.

Asbestos causes cancer of the lung, lung lining and abdomen and can take 20 years or more to manifest. According to a report in the *British Journal of Cancer* in January, asbestos will claim 500,000 lives in Europe by 2035. In the United States, the death toll is expected to be 200,000, report researchers at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine, which first linked asbestos to cancer in the '60s. Many public health experts say these are extremely conservative estimates. Incredibly, there are no comparable estimates for Canada, where asbestos has been mined since the 1870s, according to Jim Brophy, executive director of the Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers. "The Canadian public is being kept in the dark," he says.

What's more, Brophy says, few Canadians know that this fall the World Trade Organization (WTO) will rule on a Canadian appeal to overturn a 1997 French ban on asbestos

Canada's Asbestos Crusade

products, which Canada says violates international trade rules. Canadian officials fear the French ban will create a "domino effect," inspiring similar actions in former French colonies such as Morocco and Algeria—both clients of Canada's asbestos industry. Britain also is poised to ban asbestos, joining nine European countries that already have bans.

According to Claude Demers, a spokesman for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa, the Canadian government is claiming before the WTO that France doesn't have the right to ban asbestos imports because "when used properly" asbestos is safe. If Canada wins the WTO challenge, France would have to amend its law, accept trade sanctions or pay annual fines. "We believe the bans on asbestos are based on erroneous scientific evidence and therefore are not justified," Demers says. "We have a right to regain access to those markets."

Meanwhile, Canadian officials are debating whether to file a similar claim with the WTO after the European Union announced a ban in late July. If the EU ban holds up to Canada's challenge, all 15 member countries would have to amend their laws to comply with the directive. Beginning in 2005, the EU decision would ban chrysotile or "white" asbestos—the type produced in Canada and that constitutes 95 percent of use worldwide—in cement products such as pipes and roofing, brake and clutch linings for trucks, seals and gaskets, and a number of other specialized uses. The decision was based on evidence that chrysotile is carcinogenic, causing a variety of often fatal respiratory ailments, including mesothelioma, a cancer of the lung lining.

Why wage such a battle over a sagging industry that itself is dying a slow death? Although asbestos industry revenues last year were \$160 million, there are just 1,100 miners still at work—800 at the Thetford mine and another 300 in the town of Asbestos, both in Quebec. Total Canadian production—second largest in the world after Russia—has fallen sharply from 1.5 million metric tons in 1975 to just 370,000 metric tons last year.

But as asbestos demand has disappeared in the industrialized world, it has grown in developing countries. The amount of asbestos used by Asian countries almost doubled between 1970 and 1995, increasing to 1.1 million metric tons, the U.S. Geological Survey reported last year. During the same period, use in the United States and Canada dropped 96 percent, from 763,000 metric tons to 30,000 metric tons. While Natural Resources Canada reports the value of asbestos in worldwide markets fell 22 percent from 1997 to 1998, the industry is still optimistic about future sales based upon overall growth in the Third World.

As in any business, the asbestos industry sees its reputation as critical. Today, the mine owners and the Canadian government are growing concerned as more countries and international trade groups enact tougher regulations or outright bans on asbestos. "Pushing a product that industrialized countries have banned doesn't look good in those areas," Brophy says.

Canada's decision to continue peddling asbestos, of course, is not simply economic. The strategy is also political, flowing from separatist tensions constantly rippling through French-speaking Quebec, where there is great pride in the industry and where, in the mining towns, there are few employment alternatives. Government support of the asbestos industry is intended to protect mining jobs—but more importantly votes—in the politically powerful province. Canada's complex political landscape has contributed for years to the country being out of step with revelations about asbestos hazards, explains Brophy. "They missed the boat," he says. "In the late '70s, the government was nationalizing three mines while the rest of the world was learning about the dangers of asbestos."

Like unions in the United States, organized labor in Canada has battled asbestos exposure in work settings from offices to textile mills, according to Colin Lambert, health and safety director for the 450,000-member Canadian Union of Public Employees. He says CUPE is currently leading a campaign in Quebec to safeguard workers in public buildings from crumbling asbestos, after a cluster of mesothelioma cases recently emerged. But Brophy says there has been no public outcry for a ban on asbestos production from labor or Canada's environmental movement. "The mining industry in Quebec is seen within the context of the vision of an independent Quebec—and the unions for one are very supportive of that," he says. "An attack on the asbestos industry is an attack on Quebec."

When the question of a ban on chrysotile asbestos was raised at a Canadian Labour Congress convention in the mid-'80s, Brophy notes, "The whole Quebec delegation—every major union in the province—walked out. That broke the back of any kind of serious discussion within labor about an asbestos ban."

At the same time, there is a growing sense that miners themselves are at very low risk of asbestos-related disease. "They have had some real success in reducing dust exposure



An unprotected Brazilian worker breaks open bags of asbestos.

and miners are certainly bearing less risk than asbestos users in developing countries," Brophy says. "Unfortunately, miners may now think that everybody can use asbestos under the controlled conditions they work in. They don't blame the product."

Brophy says what's really at stake in this fight is the right of independent countries to regulate toxic substances within their own borders regardless of industry claims that their products can be used safely. But Denis Hamel, director of the Asbestos Institute, says chrysotile asbestos is no more hazardous than many other substances in industrial use, and that white asbestos has been unfairly targeted. "Asbestos is a general term, but we can't get confused that chrysotile and others are the same," he says, noting that the other asbestos fibers—crocidolite, amosite and anthophyllite—are more potent carcinogens. He points to evidence published in "peer-reviewed journals," without mentioning that many of these studies are industry-funded.

It is not hard to find scientific experts who strongly disagree with the benign attitude of Hamel and Demers. In an editorial published last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Mount Sinai's Dr. Philip Landrigan wrote: "All forms of asbestos are carcinogenic. All have been shown in clinical, epidemiological and laboratory studies to be fully capable of causing lung cancer, mesothelioma and the full range of asbestos-related diseases."

Hamel is undeterred by such assertions. Of course, part of his job is to advance the reasonable-sounding notion that chrysotile is not only safer than many substitute materials, but also less expensive. Thus, it can be more easily used by poor countries attempting to construct affordable shelters and infrastructures. Founded in 1984, the Montreal-based Asbestos Institute that he heads has a budget of approximately \$520,000, 60 percent of which is provided by the federal and Quebec governments, with the remainder coming from membership dues paid by the asbestos industry. The organization has a full-time staff of four and uses many

"An attack on the asbestos industry is an attack on Quebec."

consultants, including a labor liaison who is a former member of the United Steelworkers of America and the Quebec Labour Federation.

Hamel travels all over the globe to promote the "safe use" principle and combat what he calls the zealotry of "green evangelists" calling for asbestos bans. He has logged more than 100 such "missions" to date, promoting the Institute's Responsible Use Program, a voluntary agreement signed by buyers of Canadian asbestos and their governments. Buyers agreeing to the program promise to uphold the safe use of Canadian asbestos, including implementation of worker-training programs and the use of appropriate protective equipment and clothing.

They also agree to submit to random air monitoring conducted by "independent" laboratories. These labs, hired by the buyers, are charged with ensuring that airborne asbestos is less than one fiber per cubic centimeter. Who would blow the whistle if asbestos levels exceeded the voluntary policy's limit? Hamel says the consulting laboratory—the lab on the payroll of the buyer—would notify the appropriate government officials.

Critics insist that safe use of asbestos is impossible to manage. "I seriously doubt asbestos can be used safely in those countries," says Ed Olmsted, an industrial hygienist who has consulted with a number of construction industry unions in the United States. He adds that to use asbestos safely requires such costly and complex precautions that the risks and the expense are too great for most contractors in the United States, let alone the Third World.

Making matters worse, in developing countries there may be little or no enforcement at all. Cathy Walker, director of health and safety for the Canadian Auto Workers, says that conditions for the 15,000 asbestos workers in India, where she visited last year, are "appalling." Walker recounts reports of workers slicing open bags of Canadian asbestos with knives, then shaking the bags into troughs and mixing it with cement to make piping. The unprotected workers, according to the reports, were covered in asbestos dust. "Precautions are absolutely not in place," she says.

Asbestos already is causing problems worldwide. A recent study of asbestos in a South Korean textile mill found that dust levels well above U.S. standards were "commonplace."

Other studies in China point to an elevated risk of lung cancer and respiratory illness among factory workers exposed to asbestos. In Brazil, some 200,000 workers use asbestos at work, and many are exposed, says Fernanda Giannasi, an inspector with the country's labor ministry. According to a 1997 study conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Safety and World Health, there will be at least 30,000 asbestos-related cancer deaths annually for the foreseeable future.

Canada's efforts to thwart opposition to unbridled asbestos export—whether to developing or industrialized countries—are not new. In 1989, Canada challenged a comprehensive asbestos ban proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and succeeded in exempting many products from the rule, including asbestos cement pipe, disc brake pads, roof coatings and automatic transmission components. Five years earlier, when Thailand wanted to label bags of imported asbestos with a skull-and-crossbones symbol, Canada intervened and persuaded the Thais to drop the idea.

Yet neither mine owners nor Canadian government officials deny that chrysotile asbestos is dangerous. "We're saying we have the product and the safety technology and [asbestos] should only be used safely," says Jim Leveque of Natural Resources Canada. "Once we sell the stuff to a sovereign nation—if, for instance, we sell to a U.S. company and it chooses not to follow safety procedures—what the hell are we going to do about it?"

Observing proper safety precautions undoubtedly reduces health risks, but those who support widespread asbestos bans contend it is preposterous to expect such vigilance. The reality, they say, is that bans will continue to be implemented and the market will shrink. As a result, the relatively high-paying mining jobs in Quebec, as well as the jobs of many other workers who support the industry, will vanish. "In some areas of Quebec, these are the only jobs," Walker cautions. "So you simply can't throw the workers out on the scrap heap."

She suggests a "just transition" strategy for asbestos workers. This would accept that the industry is dying and that jobs eventually will be lost. But, like the GI Bill in the United States following World War II, it would provide generous assistance to those workers whose jobs are eliminated. "You have to guarantee retraining for those workers being displaced who are in a position to go elsewhere," Walker says. "For people who can't go elsewhere, they should be retiring with a decent income. Given the amount of money the federal government and industry have spent to prop up the asbestos industry, probably people could have been given full income pensions decades ago and closed the industry."

But Brophy says that within Canada the risks of asbestos don't get much public attention compared to the country's defense of the asbestos trade, so implementing such a program would be a long and difficult process. "The European ban presents us with the opportunity to take a global stand against the most documented workplace killer in existence," he says. "But right now we don't have any of that. Just this silence." ■

Jim Young is a labor writer based in New Jersey.



ULLI MICHEL/REUTERS

Eighty percent of South African voters turned out for the June elections.

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

I had just arrived in South Africa, returning after 16 years, and I was motoring north along the steamy coastal road near the Indian Ocean port of Durban, the country's third-largest city. Right away, I saw mud, wood and tin shantytowns clinging to the sides of some of the green hills; these were the homes of poorer black people, the local equivalent of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro or the *kampung*s of Jakarta.

A first-time visitor might have reacted with some shock, contrasting the shacks with the big homes in the still largely white neighborhoods like Kloof and Morningside. A newcomer could have recoiled at the tremendous inequality that persists, even as Nelson Mandela's five-year term as president ended in early June and Thabo Mbeki succeeded him after the African National Congress won another election in a landslide. This disappointed reaction would have been understandable. To a great extent, it characterized the American mainstream press reporting of the Mbeki succession. The *New York Times* contended that South Africans were "grumbling" their way toward their second free election, troubled at high rates of crime, unemployment, slow economic growth and corruption.

But I was delighted to see those shacks on hills that were uninhabited when I left in 1983. Such shantytowns around Durban, Johannesburg and other South African cities actually represent tremendous progress since the alliance between the resistance movement inside the country and the solidarity movement around the world freed Mandela and ended the formal apartheid system.

Apartheid's central axiom was that 87 percent of South Africa, including all the urban areas, the gold

FREE AT LAST?

A RETURN TO THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

BY JAMES NORTH

mines and the best farmland, "belonged" to white people; blacks were allowed in those areas only on sufferance, as "temporary sojourners." Black people had the legal right to remain permanently only in the notorious Bantustans, desperately poor, overcrowded rural districts where infant mortality surpassed levels in the rest of Africa.

Apartheid created a terrible oscillating migratory labor system. Millions of black men left their families behind in the Bantustans, staying in ugly single-sex hostels in the towns or near the mines for most of the year, returning home only at Christmas. Back in 1981, I befriended a woman in the Transkei Bantustan named Bandi Mpetha whose husband recently had died of overwork; over two decades of marriage, she and her five children had actually seen him for a total of less than three years. Today, people like Mpetha are free to move their families into what used to be "white" South Africa and live in the new shacks with their husbands. The new government is even starting to furnish the shantytowns with piped water, health clinics and other improvements.

A week or so after my return, I stopped off for lunch in the interior town of Piet Retief. It is a conservative place, which evokes in the South African consciousness something like the words Lubbock, Texas do for an American. I was astonished to see black people calmly sitting and eating in the fast food restaurant on Voortrekker Street and to observe black women selling fruits and vegetables along the curb. I knew the segregation of amenities known as petty apartheid had been abolished, but I still felt that somehow out here in the conservative *platteland*, the old customs, protected by the threat of white violence, might persist. I waited uneasily for a white police constable to pass by and angrily drive the black people away. But nothing happened.

Then, an older black man approached me, bowed slightly, and offered to wash my car. He addressed me as *numzaan*, a Zulu word of respect, which literally means "householder." A first-time visitor would have noticed the man's tattered condition and imploring manner, contrasted it with the prosperous white farmers who strolled confidently up and down the street, and noted that social and cultural inequality persisted along with the economic variety. But I was again delighted at the change for the better. Twenty years ago, when I first came to South Africa, this man would have called me *baas*, Afrikaans for "boss." *Numzaan* is applied to both black and white people; I use it myself. But no white person in the history of South Africa has ever called a black person *baas*.

Western press reports largely have disregarded such transformations, concentrating instead on the tremendous crime rate in South Africa today. Statistics are fuzzy, but the murder rate may be four times that of American cities. Nearly every middle-class person knows a friend or acquaintance who has been the victim of "car hijackers"—armed robbers, apparently often working for elaborate criminal gangs, who commandeer vehicles at traffic lights. Parts of

central Johannesburg in particular have become no-go areas where people hesitate to venture even in broad daylight.

Mandela has pointed out that high crime is nothing new in black areas, and black people continue to account for a disproportionate number of the victims. Every single urban black South African I've ever known either has been a victim of a savage assault or has witnessed one close at hand. Apartheid created a subclass of unemployed, vicious urban criminals called *tsotsis*. Today, the same kind of criminals are taking advantage of the disarray, incompetence and corruption of the police force and judicial system to extend their operations into formerly white areas.

Then there is the tremendous problem of AIDS, which has been spreading southward from the east-central part of the continent. The ANC government's efforts at education and prevention have been too little and too late. An estimated

NO WHITE PERSON IN THE HISTORY



Will new President Thabo Mbeki keep South Africa moving in the right direction?

3.6 million people are HIV-positive (as compared to about 700,000 in the United States). In another three years, 250,000 South Africans will die annually from the disease.

It is quite sobering on a walk through central Durban, as I realize that at least one out of every four of the vivacious, energetic young people I see along West Street and in the City Hall Park will be dead within the next 10 years. South Africa needs to learn from a country like Uganda, where the government has sponsored a vigorous program that has caused the rate of new infections to level off.

But another threat to South Africa's continued progress is much less apparent to mainstream Western journalists and sounds more innocuous: globalization. In 1996, the ANC government approved an economic plan called GEAR, a cautious, conservative strategy meant to retain the confidence of international investors and currency traders. The ANC felt it had no choice; the rand, the national currency, has been weakening steadily. Last year's economic turmoil in Asia and Latin America sent it on a sickening plunge that halted modest economic growth and tipped the country into a recession.

ANC Finance Minister Trevor Manuel says he cannot depart much from globalization orthodoxy. Despite the

ANC's encouraging beginnings in health, education and housing, he must restrain social spending and delay public works that could chip away at the unemployment rate of more than 20 percent. If he fails, he fears the investment bankers and currency traders in New York and London will "lose confidence" in him, incoming investment will turn around, the rand will fall further and the economy will stagnate or even sink.

Local critics have pointed out how the unjust international economic order is hampering the post-apartheid reconstruction. South Africa has active chapters of Jubilee 2000, the growing worldwide organization calling for the West to celebrate the millennium by drastically reducing Third World debt as a first step toward more fairness in the world economy. But South Africa by itself is not strong enough to challenge the forces of globalization.

home area. Whites understandably are not happy about the wave of ordinary crime, but they are not abandoning the country. They certainly do not blame Mandela, who has remained nearly as popular among them as he is among blacks. This remarkable change in white attitudes means that if South Africa can survive the pressures of globalization, it has a good chance to extend genuine nonracial democracy. The turnout in the June vote this year was upwards of 80 percent, 30 points higher than presidential elections in the United States.

Maybe there do exist cross-cultural standards of human ethics that make people uncomfortable with practices like institutionalized racism. Such customs can be imposed for a very long time, and they will not stop without pressure. But when they are brought to an end you can hear the sighs of relief, even among those who had promoted them.

SOUTH AFRICA HAS EVER CALLED A BLACK PERSON BAAS.

Still, South Africa's main problems today are not what anyone would have predicted 15 years ago. Then, the main danger seemed very clear: racial apocalypse. In 1982, President P.W. Botha lost his temper and warned publicly: "Something will happen in South Africa that the proponents of violence cannot even dream of. A big silence and desolation will come over many parts of South Africa."

The apartheid regime already was sponsoring proxy forces and conducting raids into surrounding countries that killed several hundred thousand people, mainly in Angola and Mozambique. Years later, Botha's successor revealed the regime did have nuclear weapons. Who knows how close he might have come to using them against neighboring nations that supported the anti-apartheid movement, or even in parts of his own territorially segregated country?

The ANC had reason to fear that South Africa could have turned into another Yugoslavia. The white far-right could have created even more mayhem than it did, which would have prompted black retaliation—probably not from within the ANC itself, but from other groups and individuals. Another significant danger was Gatsha Buthelezi, the Zulu ethnic chauvinist leader, who panicked as he saw his power slipping away to the ANC in his home area (which includes Durban). His Inkatha Freedom Party, with undercover help from the white security forces, had started to destroy entire communities. Some 20,000 people already had died when Mandela took office in 1994, and Buthelezi—a South African Milosevic, cunning, ambitious and committed to no program beyond his own power—could well have continued on his murderous path. Mandela brought Buthelezi into the government to placate him, and he will stay on as a high-ranking minister under President Mbeki. Some so-called moderates in the West once hailed Buthelezi as a responsible alternative to the "terrorism" of the national liberation movement. Today, they should be forced to recognize that their man was a criminal who walked into the government over the bodies of thousands of people.

The ANC's caution about the economy has been motivated partly by the very real fear that an economic collapse would have made violent chaos more likely. Thankfully, the quasi-political violence is dying down, even in Buthelezi's

Martin Luther King Jr. believed in a universal ethics; he always insisted that the civil rights movement was partly an appeal to the consciences of even the most extreme racists. Hard-headed realists dismissed him as idealistic. But they are nearly forgotten, and he is remembered all over the world, with particular affection in South Africa. Mandela, a man with similar compassion for his enemies, is now likewise a shining figure in world history.

The changes in South Africa will have as one happy consequence a better life for my godson Jay, a 7-year-old Indian South African. He lives in a family that would have been inconceivable under apartheid. His father, John Daniel, once a South African equivalent of '60s American student leader Tom Hayden, spent a quarter-century in exile for his beliefs; John is now back home as a professor of politics. Jay's mother, Cathy Connolly, is an American health statistician with extensive experience in the Third World; much of her work today is concerned with the AIDS epidemic. Jay's adopted parents and his 11-year-old sister, Lesley (also my goddaughter), are all "white"; under apartheid, Jay could not even have lived in the same neighborhood with them. Today, he goes to an integrated school, and his small friends of all colors made a ferocious racket at his birthday party.

On the last day of my visit, I gingerly posed the question I had been pondering the entire time. The Durban I remembered from the apartheid era was a tough, profane port, with white people who were loudly racist even by the harsh standards of the times. Jay and his family travel all over Durban. How often do they encounter, if not open slurs, then at least sneering references or sidelong glances at their unusual composition?

"Never," John said without hesitation. "Not once. People sometimes want to know, 'Who is this child with?' But they are just curious, not even slightly hostile."

To me, this statement was nothing short of miraculous. ■

James North lived in southern Africa from 1978 to 1983, while researching his book Freedom Rising.

KAKAMEGA, KENYA

Luka Masinde and his extended family live far from the centers of global capitalism. Getting to their home takes, first, a full day's bus ride from Nairobi to the nearest town, Kakamega. Then it's about 12 miles by van to an intersection called Kakunga, eight miles by *boda boda* (bicycle taxi) on a dirt road to the nearest outdoor market, and finally a mile walk through farm fields to reach their land.

Luka, several brothers and sons, and their families live in mud and thatched-roof huts spread among the fields. Women do most of the farm work, planting maize, root vegetables and sugarcane—both for their own consumption and as cash crops. The local diet is minimal, and starvation never very far away. Meals consist largely of three items: *ugali*, a stiff corn meal porridge; *sukuma wiki*, a dish of sautéed kale; and tea.

Neighbors supplement their incomes with small businesses: One has a sugarcane grinding mill used in making local beer, another is a blacksmith, a third cuts and sells lumber. There is no electricity in the area, and none of the families own gas-powered equipment, so all work is done by human or animal labor.

About two-thirds of Kenya's 28 million people still live on subsistence farms similar to those near Kakamega. Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, they have been subjected in recent years to an unbridled free market that makes it difficult to survive. At the same time, President Daniel Arap Moi has ruled for more than 20 years through a combination of dictatorial power, violence and corruption.

For families in Western Province, where Kakamega is located, growing enough food and getting enough money for their cash crops are the biggest worries. Luka and his family, although prominent in the local area, can no longer support everyone with what their own farm produces. So, as with many families, they have gone to great lengths to send many of the boys to school. Public education in Kenya is not free, and most families cannot afford to send their children beyond the primary grades. As of 1995, only 24 percent of secondary-age children were in school.

Yet in a nation with few jobs and absurdly low wages, getting an education is not enough. Luka's brother Samuel, a

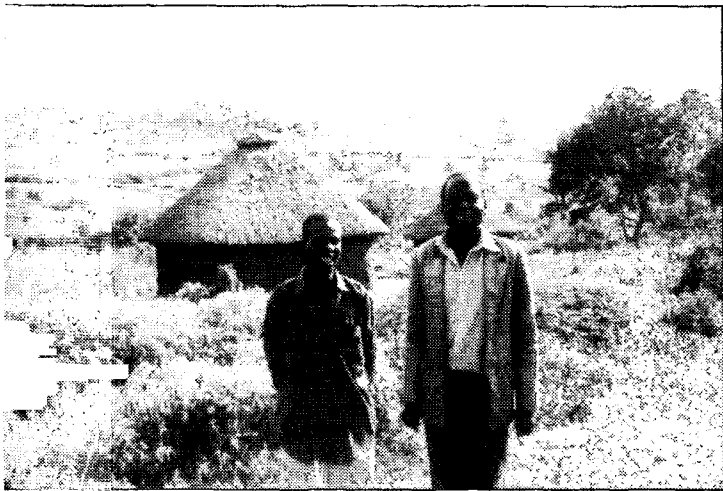
STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

KENYA'S FARMERS ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE UNBRIDLED FREE MARKET AND A CORRUPT GOVERNMENT
BY MARC BRESLOW

college-educated electronics technician, has been unable to find a permanent job. He has temporary work at the West Kenya Sugar factory, located about eight miles from the family compound, where he makes only 135 shillings a day—barely more than \$2. "Even if you have no family, that is not enough to live on," he says. "But you are forced to accept it because there is no other employment."

Across the country, wages for most agricultural and urban workers are at levels that can barely keep one person alive, let alone a family. On May 1, the government raised the minimum wage from 2,000 Kenyan shillings a month to a still-pitiful 2,140 shillings—about \$1.50 a day in a nation where six-day work weeks are still the norm. More than one-third of the population remains below Kenya's official poverty line.

Why are their own crops no longer adequate to feed Luka's clan and buy the other necessities of subsistence life? One reason is rapid population growth, and the consequent scarcity of farmland. But selling the crops is also a major difficulty. "During the rainy season, you cannot travel the roads," Luka says. "Nearly everywhere you have to carry your materials, or whatever cash crop you have harvested, on your bicycle or your wagon, which is hard." It's easy to see why: The



Samuel and Luka Masinde

dirt roads near his home look more like dried-up streambeds. Luka says the government used to come in with heavy equipment and grade the roads, but now says it can't afford to do so.

Farmers in Western Province are also captives of a barely regulated international market for food crops. "The prices we get for our cash crops are low," Luka says, "but the prices for imports [of the same crops] are high." At harvest times, local farmers must sell their crops for whatever price they can get, because the foods are perishable and they have no storage capacity. At other times of year, when local food supplies are short, people have no choice but to buy imported staples, even at higher prices.

There once was a system designed to regulate the ups and downs of the farming year, but that has disappeared. "When there was a lot of production, the government used to buy cereals from the farmers at a fair price and store it—and then when supply was limited, they would sell it to the farmers at a fair price," says Peter, one of Luka's sons, who studied agricultural engineering in college.

But now, under the urging of the World Bank and IMF, Kenya has "liberalized" agriculture—eliminating all efforts to control the free market. The government no longer stores maize, and it allows food imports with few restrictions. Food production per

person has fallen by 9 percent since 1980. "We are suffering from liberalization because our economy has not grown," Peter argues. "We have not improved our production techniques, so we cannot compete with our counterparts elsewhere."

Throughout the Third World, the IMF and World Bank take the position that unregulated markets are the best bet for enhancing growth and development. In order to release loan funds, the IMF has demanded that Kenya privatize publicly owned industries, fully open itself to imports, balance the federal budget and create "an enabling environment for local and foreign investors to do business." While it's clear that investors benefit from such policies, they have provided few gains to most Kenyans.

Sam Mwale, an agricultural economist in Nairobi who consults for development agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank, is openly critical of liberalization. "In the '70s to about the mid-'80s, when Kenya was being touted as a success, we had a system that worked relatively well," he says. The government funded agricultural research, ran an Agricultural Finance Corporation that provided credit to farmers, bought crops at a guaranteed price, and sold fertilizer and certified seed to farmers at prices they could count on.

The system began to break down not from IMF-induced free market reforms, but due to power-grabbing by President Moi. The national institutions supporting farmers, such as the Kenya Farmers Association and the National Cereals and Produce Board, were an alternative power center that Moi could not tolerate. So beginning in the '80s, he wrecked them—with no objection from the World Bank.

At that time, the government still protected local farmers from international competition. But beginning in 1993, Kenya loosened controls on imports in response to demands by the IMF for liberalization. This change, combined with the subsidies that some countries give to their own domestic farming, has caused a flood of imports into Kenya.

Despite liberalization, imports should be hindered by the remaining duties on them. But these duties can be evaded by people who have influence with the government.

Products such as sugar, perhaps the most important cash crop, come in from abroad at prices that undercut local farmers. In March, the Kenya Sugarcane Growers Association said that massive imports were threatening the farmers' survival. In April, the government finally stepped

serves, is a major source of revenue—money that Moi may now try to loot for his own purposes.

In earlier decades, the United States and its allied lending agencies were fervent backers of Moi and his predecessor, Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's founding president. After achieving independence from the British in 1963, Kenya was a bulwark of anti-communism, and the West was happy to overlook corruption, repression and economic failures. But with the col-

WHILE IT'S CLEAR THAT INVESTORS BENEFIT FROM IMF POLICIES, THEY HAVE PROVIDED FEW GAINS TO MOST KENYANS.

in, promising to block all sugar imports (except for specific industrial uses) until local stocks were sold. However, the World Bank and IMF have concentrated their attention on dissolving this system of agricultural regulation.

The international lenders also ignore Kenya's vastly unequal land ownership. While most families face a shortage of land—much of the land is held by a small number of wealthy owners, a result of corruption and the colonial legacy. "Reform as an anti-poverty strategy must involve land reform," argues Wachira Maina, a prominent constitutional lawyer and critic of the government.

lapse of the Soviet Union, the United States began criticizing dictatorial regimes, while demanding democratic reforms and less corrupt uses of its funds. Under international pressure, Moi was forced to legalize political parties besides his own. He is scheduled to leave office in 2002, and a process is underway to write a new constitution by that time.

But the short-term outlook for Kenya is not encouraging. While some democratization may be in the offing, in recent months Moi's political party, KANU, has forcefully showed its intentions to retain a near-monopoly on power, even after its leader leaves office. And many Kenyans are skeptical about the ability of the nation's other parties to rise above Moi's legacy of corruption. Luka Masinde, for example, argues that having been denied power for so long, these parties are only too anxious to grab their share of the spoils.

Under President Moi, corruption takes various forms. There are huge numbers of people on the government payroll or those of the many state-owned enterprises, helping to ensure Moi's political support—but little money is available for carrying out their agencies' functions. "More than 80 percent of the government budget pays salaries [of people] who do nothing because they don't have the tools to do their jobs," says Mbatia wa Ngai, an economics columnist with the *Daily Nation*, Kenya's leading newspaper. Government contracts often are given in return for bribes, and the work may be done at higher cost than necessary, or not done at all. Taxes can be evaded through payoffs—one reason that the government is so short of funds.

While Kenya's founding constitution provided for democratic mechanisms, over the years Moi has centralized power in his own office. He gradually has shifted government agencies, such as defense, police and immigration into the "office of the president" to give himself more immediate authority. In April, six more agencies lost their autonomy, lengthening the list to 48 departments under Moi's direct control. Among them is the Kenya Wildlife Service, which, as steward of the game pre-

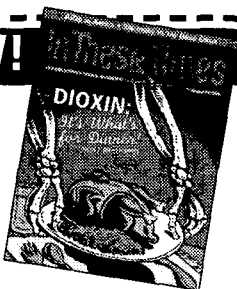
Many reform-minded Kenyans see the IMF, World Bank and foreign lenders as having a positive influence. Because Moi needs their loans, these institutions have more leverage on the government than anyone inside Kenya. Politically this has been positive, helping to push Moi toward democratic reforms; but economically the free-market policies have been a disaster. Despite the evident failures of IMF-promoted policies, it's difficult to make the case to Kenyans that capitalists could treat them worse than their own government. "At independence we had amazing faith in government," Maina says. "Now, after 30 years, we have developed this amazing faith in the private sector, because the only institutions we see working are private ones—hospitals, schools, garbage collection. ... We are going to have a difficult process of recognizing the problems of private power." ■

Marc Breslow, former editor of *Dollars and Sense*, is research director at the Corporate Accountability Project in Cambridge, Mass.

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Mixed Signals

By Philip Connors

My radio is a sad specimen. It doubles as a cheap plastic digital alarm clock, and on one of the cross-country journeys of its peripatetic owner the little red needle on the dial broke off. This is no great tragedy. Radio is a medium I negotiate not by visual signpost but by sound, and needle or not I always find WBAI-FM, Pacifica radio's station in New York (the network's other stations are in Berkeley, Houston, Los Angeles and Washington). Pacifica is the only true noncommercial broadcast outlet remaining, so I simply skip anything crass, anything banal, any cheerful voice or bad jingle.

Imagine my consternation then, when on a recent Sunday evening two complete sweeps of the FM band produced nothing but harsh and boorish sounds.

Active Radio: Pacifica's Brash Experiment

By Jeff Land
University of Minnesota Press
179 pages, \$16.95

Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network

By Matthew Lasar
Temple University Press
277 pages, \$34.95

Where was that island of sanity in the sea of commercial twaddle? Had I mistakenly flipped over to AM? Unfortunately, no. I found Pacifica eventually, though I did not believe my ears. WBAI's movie critic played the audio of one movie trailer after another, introducing each by listing its release date, its director, the notable members of its cast and the studio that bequeathed it. It sounded like a string of commercials to me, so at the end of the hour I was dismayed to learn I had just been privy to Paul Wunder's "summer movie preview."

Given what has happened lately at Berkeley station KPFA (more on that in a moment) this may seem like a trifling complaint. But it is emblematic of the institutional crisis Pacifica now suffers. In a breach this large between professed ideals and actual practice, it's

not terribly surprising that a network founded on a pacifist vision finds itself in a fratricidal war.

This year was supposed to be one of celebration for Pacifica as the network marked its fiftieth anniversary, but its listeners and employees have spent far less time in a state of giddy self-congratulation than they have wailing and gnashing their teeth. The trouble boiled over in March, when Pacifica Foundation executive director Lynn Chadwick refused to renew the contract of KPFA's popular station manager Nicole Sawaya. This action was inexplicable even to many of Chadwick's supporters. Sawaya, by all accounts, had managed during her tenure to unite a station riven by distrust and bitterness after a nasty contract negotiation. On her watch the station's listener pledge drive finished \$40,000 above its goal after years of the station operating in the red.

Why was Sawaya fired? The best Chadwick offered was that Sawaya "wasn't a team player." This is a shorthand way of saying that Chadwick and other members of the national board didn't appreciate Sawaya's questioning of the board's increasingly bloated budget and tendency toward bureaucratic centralization. (In 1975, less than 1 percent of KPFA's budget went to the Pacifica Foundation. Now it's close to 20 percent.)

KPFA staffers were stunned by Sawaya's dismissal. When Larry Bensky, one of the network's best programmers, used airtime to protest the board's action, his show was pulled and a gag rule was implemented. Since then, the conflict has escalated in a series of protests and recriminations, the most recent climax occurring on July 13, when KPFA veteran Dennis Bernstein quite literally was yanked off the air by management for violating the gag rule. His tussle with guards was caught on the air, prompting a spontaneous sit-in protest. Management called in the cops and had 53 people arrested. The station momentarily

went off the air before resuming broadcast with tapes from its archives.

Chadwick was conspicuously silent throughout most of the ruckus, giving the impression of a leadership vacuum. Chadwick claimed her goal was to improve the quality of programming and increase listenership, but her heavy-handed actions had precisely the opposite effect. Sadly, some of the staff and its supporters acted just as irresponsibly. One dim bulb fired shots at Pacifica Foundation headquarters, and protesters branded management with terms like "Pinochetista."

"The only thing I can compare it to is Nixon invading Cambodia," KPFA news director Mark Mericle told the *East Bay Express*, a local free weekly. Such hyperbole—and disconnect from reality—turned Sawaya's defenders into a parody of themselves. The ironies would be comic if they weren't so sad: A radio network founded on the ideals of pacifism, free speech and clear-minded dissent seemed to devolve overnight into gunshots, gag rules and hysteria. So much for champagne and birthday cake.

But the biggest outrage came when an e-mail from Pacifica board member Michael Palmer to Mary Frances Berry, Pacifica's board chairwoman, was made public after it was sent to the wrong person. In that message, Palmer strenuously suggests "shutting down that unit"—KPFA—and selling the station license to a commercial broadcaster for as much as \$75 million.

When these clandestine machinations were exposed, any shred of authority the board may have possessed instantly dissipated. Its bluff was called: It either had to sell the station or back down. It chose the latter, and the station's employees were invited back to work in an extremely tense pseudo-truce. In one heartening sign, more than 10,000 people marched in Berkeley on July 31 in a gesture of support for KPFA and its employees. But there's no denying this feud has damaged its connection to the people who really matter: the listeners. The only credible step toward repairing the breach would be for the Pacifica directorate to resign—but I'm afraid we'll sooner see Newt Gingrich as vice president in a Hillary Clinton administration.

Every year ... there has been internecine warfare here. There is a very simple explanation for this. The people who work at the station are individuals with strong minds and strong points of view. That's why they're here in the first place. ... I can foresee no future time when KPFA will be smugly sitting here on a nice income with everyone feeling satisfied saying, 'We've made it, fellas, now we can just coast along.' We're still a brawling, vigorous, active, impassioned bunch of people working here. And as long as you have this kind of people involved at the station, you'll never have a nice, comfortable sitting-back kind of feeling."

As appropriate as these words may seem to the current situation at Pacifica, they were spoken by KPFA manager Al Partridge 34 years ago on the occasion of the network's sixteenth birthday. I gleaned this statement from Jeff Land's *Active Radio: Pacifica's Brash Experiment*, one of two books published this spring to coincide with Pacifica's 50th anniversary. The other is Matthew Lasar's *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network*. Land's study succeeds in showing how Pacifica prodded and reacted to the various progressive social movements of the Cold War era, while Lasar's book is more concerned with charting the various personality and philosophi-

cal squabbles of Pacifica's early history. Each is fascinating reading.

One learns, for instance, that Pacifica founder Lewis Hill, dismayed at the moribund state of wartime pacifism, planned in 1945 to sail halfway across the Pacific Ocean with 12 men, where they would meet with a group of Japanese pacifists and implore their respective governments to end the war—only to see the plan scuttled by the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Hill first applied to the FCC for a license to broadcast on the AM band from a station in Richmond, Calif., where he hoped to bring a pacifist message to a largely working-class boomtown. But he was rejected by the FCC and forced to retailor his message for broadcast on the FM band to the bourgeois professoriate of Berkeley. Hill's vision of a station devoted to anarcho-pacifist principles and radical dialogue had just begun to flourish—only to run smack up against McCarthyism and the poisoning of the public sphere. The station was forced to alter its mission to provide safe haven for unpopular and dissenting individual speech.

Hill was a radical whose politics had been profoundly shaped by a stint in a World War II camp for conscientious objectors, but he also had a literary sen-

sibility. In 1957, Hill broadcast Allen Ginsberg reading "Howl"—albeit a somewhat tamer version—and then followed with a roundtable discussion on the book's controversy with, among others, Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Hill built a radio network that coupled edginess with smarts—one where George Carlin could challenge the FCC with his "seven dirty words" and Pauline Kael could offer her erudite commentaries on contemporary film, where WBAI's Bob Fass could urge his followers to attend a "fat-in" in Central Park and a ragtag group of reporters could produce coverage of the Free Speech movement in mid-'60s Berkeley that made other news organizations look like charlatans and fools.

At every twist and turn of our tumultuous half-century, Pacifica was on the edge of the social changes sweeping the country, often embodying the contradictions inherent in those changes. When the witch hunts passed, Pacifica became a nexus for the emerging anti-Vietnam War movement. When war protests gave way to the various liberation movements of the '70s, Pacifica attempted to accommodate demands for airtime from newly militant voices. And as the Reagan revolution of the '80s further splintered whatever passed for a unified political left into calcified categories of identity, Pacifica polished the concept of "community radio." As Land writes, "The core issue was not that everything *worth* saying be presented but that everyone wishing a forum be given an opportunity to speak. Who might be able to estimate the 'worth' of a given program became an unresolvable problem, one whose thorny legacy continues to throttle the left."

Perhaps after 50 years of smart and provocative broadcasting, the good people at Pacifica will revisit Lewis Hill's original animating idea: peace. Not just to clarify institutional purpose, but for the network's very survival. For unless both sides of the conflict at KPFA lay down their literal and linguistic weaponry, Pacifica will end up another example of that old cliché about groups on the left: a circular firing squad that leaves no one standing. ■

Philip Connors is a writer based in New York.



Pacifica President Harold Winkler and KPFA board member Bill Butler with actor Vincent Price during a 1959 broadcast.



Turn-of-the-century tourists in New York visited the city's monuments, churches, prisons and universities.

The Occidental Tourist

By John Ghazvinian

In 1643, Thomas Neale, an English moral educator, lashed out at "rash inconsiderate hot-headed spirits, and vaine glorious brain-sick youths." What Neale was referring to was a phenomenon that had begun to rear its head in the past 50 years, and whose troubling

out of hand by liberals and conservatives alike. Its morality may no longer be in question, as it was in the early 17th century, but its sheer tackiness still draws disdain.

It is, in a word, tourism, or the idea that one could travel merely for pleasure and the satisfaction of curiosity, rather than for some predetermined diplomatic, scientific or mercantile purpose. The idea was first tested by the idle young sons of the English gentry in the early 17th century, and almost immediately drew scorn and fear. To travel merely to see—but not to work or study—was a radical concept to the likes of Joseph Hall, the Bishop of Norwich, who in 1617 insisted that he had no problem with travel that had a point to it—"the good Huswife of the Common-wealth"—but that "it is the Travell of curiosity wherewith my quarell shall bee maintained."

This distinction between "casual" and "serious" travel still operates, distinguishing the "traveler" from the mere "tourist," and is the main theme of a triad of books released over the past two and a half years, the latest of which is Cindy Aron's *Working at Play*. The idea that you can simply "drift in and drift out" of a foreign place, as Edward Abbey put it, "like turds floating through the sewer"; the idea that you can make the most cursory observations, take a few

pictures and "say you've been there," is apparently an idea so invidious, so repugnant, that the very word "tourist" has become postmodernity's most stinging moniker.

There is a puzzling dissonance between the fact that tourism long ago surpassed petroleum production as the world's largest industry, and the fact that hardly anyone will admit to actually being a tourist. Since even before the beginning of tourism itself, every time the middle class has noticed a number of people traveling merely to enjoy themselves, there has been an almost-paranoid backlash, a rule-besotted creation to beat back and supplant the sinister force of pure, uncircumscribed pleasure.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, this impulse for making vacations productive took the form of the "Grand Tour," a heavily regimented diet of key sites and cities in Europe and the proper lessons that were to be taken away from them by young gentlemen. Today, even the bourgeois left cannot steer clear of the urge. When *The Nation* announced its first ever seminar cruise, the magazine drew a fair amount of criticism from its readers—everything from accusations of champagne socialism to cautions about the environmental impact of cruise ships. One cannot help but wonder, though, if the heart of the matter did not lie closer to what Molly Ivins said when she complained to *Mother Jones* that the cruise "should be going to Haiti to build houses"—doing something more *useful*, in other words, than playing shuffleboard off the coast of St. Thomas.

The 19th and early 20th century American equivalent of this instinct is the subject of *Working at Play*, which follows the story of middle-class insecurity over excessive idleness, and the variety of attempts made to introduce sobriety and productivity to the vacations of working people.

Aron skillfully traces the evolution of vacations, while simultaneously describing the insecurities that the burgeoning phenomenon raised. She very astutely begins with the Puritan distinction

Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States

By Cindy S. Aron
Oxford University Press
324 pages, \$35

Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age

By Harvey Levenstein
University of Chicago Press
392 pages, \$30

Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915

By Lynne Withey
William Morrow
384 pages, \$30

ascendancy would, despite the best efforts of reformers, never be reversed. It was a phenomenon so distasteful, so disarmingly subversive, that, even today, after the death of God and the birth of a radically permissive, aggressively tolerant moral compass, it is still condemned

between "recreation" and "amusement"—the former good, the latter suspect—and examines the growth of self-improvement resorts, religious camps, chautauquas and educational world's fairs as a response to the increasing reports of licentiousness and dissipation that came from seaside resorts

Its morality may no longer be in question, as it was in the early 17th century, but tourism's sheer tackiness still draws disdain. It is condemned by liberals and conservatives alike.

and fashionable spas. She follows the narrative into the early 20th century, covering the formation of coherent company policies on paid vacation time, and the national conversation on holidays for ethnic minorities and the working poor. *Working at Play*, as its title indicates, is the story of America's struggle to relax.

The book is certainly rich in detail, some of it quite fascinating—the discussion of the mini police forces created by some of the chautauquas, for instance, or the failure of organized labor in America to address the issue of paid vacations, as contrasted with their European counterparts. However, all such discussions are kept disarmingly brief, and at very few points does the book seem to unearth anything new, unexpected or even all that interesting. And, though the chapters cohere internally and there is a definite sense of narrative progression, the reader ends up adrift in a sea of anecdote, wanting the anchor of a well-articulated purpose.

Traditionally, the history of travel has been subjected to a triumvirate of intellectual approaches. First, there were the bad old days, those dusty, fusty old leather-armchair narratives that lionized the heroic pioneer travelers of the 19th century. Then, there were sociologists, like Dean MacCannell in 1965

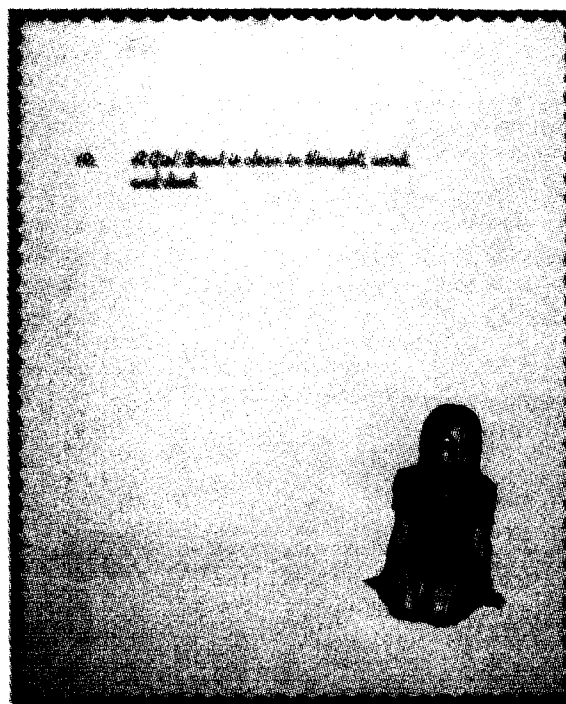
and before him Thorstein Veblen in 1899, who took an approach that was largely informed by some form of determinism, economic or otherwise. More recently, there have been literary historians like Stephen Greenblatt, Paul Fussell or Mary Louise Pratt, who have been concerned with questions surrounding the discursive power of language, and those pesky issues of representation and otherness. However, up until this point, there has been a desperate need for what could be called (with apologies) a "straight" history of pleasure travel, a book isolating the whens, the whos, the hows, the wheres, the whys and the how-manys. Lynne Withey did just that in 1997 (more on her later), and it looked like the narrative had been rescued from the traditional rubrics. Why then does Aron's book, so promisingly positioned, so firmly disappoint?

It could have something to do with her unwavering dedication to dull prose. More likely, though, it is because she glosses over the rather enjoyable task of telling us why we should care about the history of vacations in the first place. This omission is made all the more regrettable by the fact that *Working at Play* is an otherwise solid and well-researched book. It would only have taken a page or two in the introduction to endow the entire endeavor with a guiding light. The space instead is given over to Aron's childhood memories, and the net result reads rather like a glorified book report—heavy on self-satisfied reportage, but badly in need of an opinion.

A far more engaging read is available in a book published a year ago, Harvey

Levenstein's *Seductive Journey*, which deals with American tourists in Paris during more or less the same era. In contrast to Aron, Levenstein employs a lively prose style, assigns himself an impressive portfolio that draws in and showcases the various aspects of travel history, and imbues the entire project with a palpable sense of purpose.

Levenstein's is also a story of a decline in the idea of travel as a noble cultural pursuit, and its displacement by a coarser brand of tourism, more focused on pleasure than enlightenment. He begins with Jefferson and his belief in a method for travel modeled on the European Grand Tour, and goes on to trace the attempts of the American upper class to "keep away from the Joneses" as travel to Paris became a cheaper, more popular and more libidinous option for increasing numbers of Americans. Of course, as Levenstein is the first to point out, such a facile narrative obscures the reality of libertinism and dissipation that marked even the earliest and noblest of "cultural" tours. And his eloquent preface goes a long way toward



Big Mint-green Painting with Girl Scout Law by Su-en Wong. Wong's self-portraits take an adult look at growing up in a homogenized culture. Her new work can be seen at the Chicago Cultural Center through Oct. 3.

dispelling the absurd idea, propagated by Daniel Boorstin among others, that the 19th century saw the decline of "travel" and the rise of "tourism" (or whether there is even a useful distinction between the two terms.)

Levenstein shows how changes in transportation gradually made it possible for Americans further and further down the social scale to afford trips to France, and how the veneer of "cultural tourism" as opposed to "recreational tourism" was always used to distance oneself from the tourist just one notch below (or even above) in social status. This is where his themes overlap with Aron's, but, mercifully, they are only the starting point for this book. The flourishes come in the form of fascinating discussions of such things as the "dough-boys" of World War I, the deterrent force of transatlantic seasickness, the French insistence on *égalité* for African-Americans, and the accusations of "snobbish affectation" foisted upon travelers on their return to the States. Most delightful of all is the chapter on what Levenstein calls "antitourism," in which he shows us how Americans always have despised the sight of other Americans while traveling in Europe.

This kind of one-upmanship is also the dominant theme of Lynne Withey's 1997 book, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*. Withey's traveler is constantly bemoaning the fate of once-favorite destinations now "ruined" by the arrival of other tourists. She deftly interweaves the experiences of individual travelers with the rise of what she calls "the business of travel." After opening with the gentleman's Grand Tour of the 18th century, Withey introduces a discussion of Thomas Cook and his efforts to democratize travel by making it affordable to a larger segment of the population. She describes the antagonism and disdain that Cook's tourists drew, and the ensuing impulse toward luxury travel among "cultured" travelers at the end of the 19th century, who were desperate to create experiences that were out of the reach of the unappreciative *arrivistes*.

Grand Tours and Cook's Tours is a solid overview of the origins, growth and expansion of leisure travel, and will probably become, in time, the

standard textbook against which more specific offerings like those of Levenstein and Aron will be judged. It should be the point of departure for anyone wanting an *entrée* into the history of leisure travel, but it also happens to be a fun read.

So where does all this leave *Nation* cruises and houses in Haiti? After all, we live in an atmosphere where the conservative press can have a field day with the idea that 400 leftists actually might enjoy themselves out at sea, and where the slightest insistence on sensitivity calls forth groaning, eye-rolling and accusations of "political correctness." Has the left just inherited another old middle-class mantle, or is there such a thing as socialist fun?

Certainly, we find ourselves in a peculiarly vexed position when it comes to the question of enjoyment. Though years of struggle have fought

for, and secured, the rights of workers to paid vacation time, the left has spent very little time sorting out its views about exactly what is done with that time off. The very legitimate fear of the conflation of mass capital and mass leisure (generally in the shape of Disney), though well-meant, may not be well-placed. There very well may be a significant difference in afflatus between the hand-wringing of the left and the hand-wringing of the 19th-century bourgeoisie as described in these books. However, if the message that fun is bad continues to be associated with the left, it will only serve to alienate the working class even more. ■

John Ghazvinian is a writer in New York whose employer, *The Nation*, profited handsomely from its seminar cruise last winter.

The Grind of History

By Elizabeth Millard

One of the most beloved tales surrounding the discovery of coffee centers on an over-worked 6th century Ethiopian goat herder named Kaldi, who noticed his charges getting jazzed up after a few

the globe, and is now the second most valuable legal item of international trade, after petroleum. Approximately \$50 billion is spent annually on those morning mugs, afternoon pick-me-ups and after-dinner *demitasses*, amounting to around 2.25 billion cups per day, with the United States drinking the most. Like oil, coffee has a rich and complex history rife with triumphs and tragedies, from thrilling stories of discovery and instant millionaires to depressing yarns about the exploitation of the poor by yet another cadre of fat cats.

Unlike oil, coffee occupies a distinctive place in the cultural landscape, sparking devotion and inspiring poetry in a way Texas tea never could. In *The Coffee Book*, Gregory Dicum and Nina Luttinger write: "Only a handful of consumer goods has fueled the passions of the public as much as coffee. The subject of ancient propaganda and the object of countless prohibitions and promotions over the centuries, coffee has inspired impassioned struggles on the battlefields of economics, human rights, politics and religion."

The Coffee Book: Anatomy of an Industry from Crop to the Last Drop

By Gregory Dicum and Nina Luttinger
The New Press

196 pages, \$14.95

Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World

By Mark Pendergras

Basic Books

400 pages, \$27.50

nibbles on some red berries. After eating a handful of the raw stuff himself, Kaldi began to dance around with the goats, revived and rejuvenated, becoming the world's very first coffee achiever.

Over the centuries, coffee has spread in popularity in nearly every corner of

The journey from simple crop to lucrative asset began in the Arab world, where secrets of cultivation were jealously guarded and foreigners were forbidden from visiting coffee farms. Increased travel by Europeans, combined with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, however, slowly tore down Arab defense of the bean. Dutch spies smuggled plants out and cultivated the ill-gotten gain in their colonies in Java. Venetian traders, the first to introduce coffee to Europe in the 17th century, imported beans from Egypt, and the European coffee revolution began to explode.

Coffeehouses popped up in England, France and Germany, attracting people from every class and social position. In his 17th century cafe, Edward Lloyd helped his insurance salesman customers by posting a list of ship schedules, their cargo and their insurance needs. Thus, over cups of Turkish-style brew, Lloyd's of London was founded. Other coffeehouses spawned the Stock Exchange, the Banker's Clearinghouse and newspapers like *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*. Political ideas were also plentiful, especially in the New World. In New York's Merchant's Coffeehouse, patrons could satisfy their cravings while meeting about the Stamp Act or the battles of Lexington and Concord. The breadth of information available in such cafes was so great that in England they were christened "penny universities," giving customers cheap education along with their heady, albeit somewhat grainy, brew.

The indigenous populations of European colonies such as Java, Brazil and Haiti were not so fortunate. With the demand for coffee increasing at a dizzying rate, the need for workers to grow, harvest and ship the beans became even greater, leading to a massive wave of slavery. Even after freedom from imperial control in the late 19th century, local workers were thrust into



Most coffee workers still live in abject poverty.

"coffee oligarchies" that perpetuated a cycle of forced labor, exploitation and control by the wealthy. At the close of the 20th century, the situation is not much improved. Most coffee workers still live in abject poverty—without plumbing, electricity or medical care. Eager for low-cost coffee, the United States actively has supported these oligarchies, and been party to the overwhelming economic inequality that coffee production creates.

Even as the authors list the unbelievable variations they "sucked down" just to pen this little work, they admit: "The coffee in your cup is an immediate, tangible connection with the rural poor in some of the most destitute parts of the planet. It is a physical link across space and cultures from one end of the human experience to the other." Their dedication to documenting the costs and benefits of the murky brew is what makes *The Coffee Book* strangely delightful, even given its long tracts about slavery and exploitation. The authors strike a hopeful tone for the future, perhaps because they, like so many others on the planet, would shudder at the prospect of coffee's disappearance. The fault lies in ourselves, they seem to say, not in the beans.

Their optimism comes from their enthusiasm for "conscious coffee," beans grown with economic justice and

ecological balance in mind. With shade-grown beans that are good for the ecosystem and fair trade organizations that are good for farmers, "conscious coffee is creating a successful model ... that is more harmonious with human and biological systems, yet still provides the best-quality product in an efficient manner." Maybe you can have your coffee and drink it, too.

In a more exhaustive and detail-laden history, *Uncommon Grounds*, Mark Pendergrast also covers the mostly sorrowful journey that coffee has taken. But his work excels for its rich explanation of

the 20th century's dubious accomplishment in the realm of coffee: salesmanship and marketing. He writes:

For good or ill, coffee's modern saga explores broader themes—the importance of advertising, development of assembly-line mass production, urbanization, women's issues, concentration and consolidation of national markets, the rise of the supermarket, automobile, radio, television, "instant" gratification, technological innovation, multinational conglomerates, market segmentation, commodity control schemes, and just-in-time inventories. The bean's history also illustrates how an entire industry can lose focus, allowing upstart micro-roasters to reclaim quality and profits—and then how the cycle begins again, with bigger companies gobbling smaller ones in another round of concentration and merger.

Quite an impact for a small green bean that is essentially just the pit of a berry. Pendergrast proves every point, filling the book with anecdotes and fun footnoted facts. He describes how most coffee advertising earlier in the century was sexist, convincing housewives that their worth depended solely on shopping

acumen. But a footnote unearths an odd and short-lived brand from 1913: "Hixson's Suffragette Coffee," dedicated to the expectation that women's "sphere of influence for good may be given broader and wider scope through suffrage."

Pendergrast also artfully explores the boom and bust cycles of the harvest, the main reason behind wild price fluctuations throughout history. The author shows how the early 20th century was between Maxwell House, Folgers, Arbuckle's and Hills Brothers became the basis for much of today's modern media and marketing. He also describes an amazing cast of characters who would give Theodore Dreiser's cutthroat financiers sleepless nights. From John Arbuckle, the first to sell roasted coffee by the pound "in little paper bags like peanuts," to coffee's nemesis, C.W. Post,

Now almost 2,200 stores strong, the Starbucks revolution has been accompanied by the same predatory tactics that mark coffee's history.

who developed a coffee substitute for the "health-minded," the players in the java conflicts were classic American entrepreneurs. They made millions even through the Depression.

The reason that these men could survive devastating frosts in Brazil, turbulent world markets and two world wars was, as always, the demand. From its very beginning, coffee was established as a social drink, an alternative to alcohol that kept the mind alert and marriages intact. When the increase in women imbibers coincided with uniform commercial roasting and advertising blitzes, coffee became a necessity in the American home. After work in the '30s, people listened to radio programs sponsored by coffee companies, finding themselves shocked by Mae West on the *Chase & Sanborn Hour*, delighted by the cast of salty characters on the *Maxwell*

House Show Boat program. On the job, workers took advantage of a new workplace invention: the coffee break.

In the '60s, the coffee giants stumbled. With intense competition, coffee quality was sacrificed, and drinkers were lost. Pendergrast writes: "To stay in business, you had to cut prices. To cut prices, you had to narrow profit margins. To maintain profitability, you had to cut quality. And so it went, in a seemingly vicious circle." In the '70s and '80s, the growth of other caffeinated beverages like cola threatened to trample history's most popular bean.

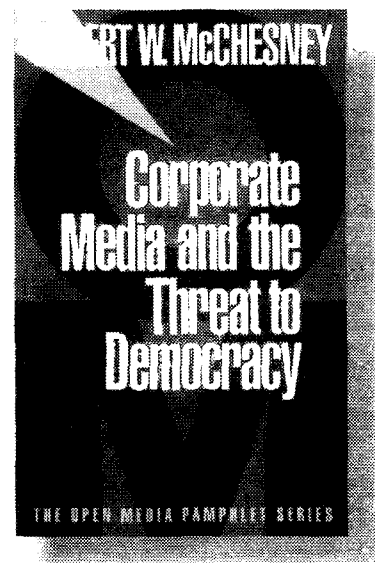
The downward spiral that coffee had entered was reversed by a disgruntled Dutchman, Alfred Peet, whose gourmet coffee-roasting abilities kick started consumption anew. He began Peet's Coffee & Tea in 1966 in Berkeley, Calif., quietly serving devoted customers who had grown fanatic about his dark roasts and groovy store. A few years later, Peet was visited by Zev Siegl, who, along with college friends Jerry Baldwin and Gordon Bowker, yearned for the kind of coffee they'd had while traveling through Europe together. With Peet's blessing, the trio copied his store design, learned his roasting techniques and opened a little store in 1971 in Seattle called Starbucks.

Now almost 2,200 stores strong, Starbucks has plans to expand into Europe and Asia. The Starbucks revolution, though only a few years old, has been accompanied by the same predatory tactics that mark coffee's history: gobbling up smaller competition and spreading into regions controlled by local retailers.

We've come a long way from Kaldi's little dance with his goats. For those who depend on the berry pits for a smooth transition from sleep to work, a quick afternoon jolt or a post-dinner treat, it would be nice to have the goat herder's innocence. But histories such as *The Coffee Book* and *Uncommon Grounds* highlight the injustice and exploitation of the coffee industry. The disparity between rich and poor that exists in every mug turns the usual cup of joe into an exercise in how much a coffee drinker can ignore. ■

Elizabeth Millard is a writer in Boston.

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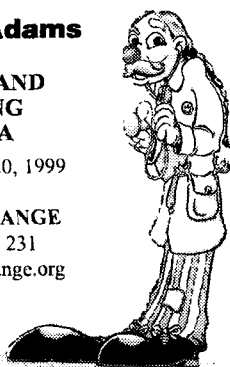
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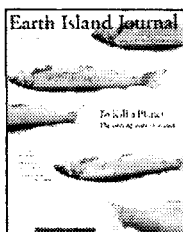
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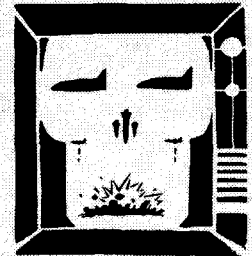
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and commercials during the judge shows prove that it could be profitably spent on telephone counseling with a gifted psychic.

As indicated, the ur-type of contemporary judge shows appeared during the first Reagan administration. But the genre's rebirth owes less to any special quality of *The People's Court* than to processes unleashed by the deregulation of TV itself. After the early '80s, more stations had more hours per day from which to extract revenue. The scramble for advertising dollars meant a search for "content"—and low-cost syndicated shows had the potential to earn big money for producers and broadcasters alike.

The change in the broadcasting environment induced a mutation in what previously had been a rather tame species. Talk shows long had been the preserve of self-help gurus and celebrities granting the audience a taste of their personalities. By the late '80s, producers rediscovered a phenomenon originally detected some years earlier by child psychologists: Kids who would never admit shoplifting or masturbating when questioned by an adult became amazingly candid and talkative if they thought the interview was being taped for television.

The rest is history. Every conceivable sexual or ideological minority made its way to the studios. People of the most diverse ethnicities—who might otherwise find nothing in common—could share the unique pleasure of denigrating family members on national television. For maximum sensation at minimum expense, no form could compete with the talk shows.

The cultural right denounced them as trash: They were the embodiment of feminist and gay liberation, consummate products of the '60s effort to extirpate all shame. The cultural left praised the shows—on essentially the same grounds. In any case, though the format remained popular and profitable, it was clear by the mid-'90s that a crisis of overproduction had set in. There were simply not enough misanthropes to watch all of the talk shows being broadcast, and some went off the air.

FEnter Judge Judith Sheindlin, formerly of the New York Family Court. She went on the air with the *Judge Judy* show in 1996. And from this genetic material, additional programs were cloned.

Small variations among the judges give them distinct profiles: Joe Brown is African-American, Mills Lane is a bald ex-Marine, Ed Koch is an egomaniac. But all share a common quality. While their programs resemble the talk show (conflicts among the non-rich and not-particularly-famous are essential to both formats), the judges themselves systematically undercut the *mores* of the talk show.

Guests on a talk show are encouraged to express themselves. They seek to dominate the microphone. This is permitted by the host—who is unshockable, and ultimately indifferent to the opinions and epithets flying around the studio. (Any lapse by the host into surprise or disapproval will quickly be shrugged off by everyone.) Guests are

encouraged to reveal their secrets, desires and hostilities. Analogies to the confessional or the psychotherapy session spring to mind, but solitary reflection is not part of the process. Maximum candor is the talk show's greatest value—dead air, the only taboo. Should the discussion lag, a host's instinct is to say, "Is there anything you'd like to say to X?" or "So, how does that make you feel?"

With the judge shows, all of this is reversed. Participants are not encouraged to reveal the depths of their souls, nor their tattoos, nor to address any matter beyond the dispute at hand. On talk shows, the issues that get people yelling often concern personal identity, which often means sex. On judge shows, conflicts undergo a certain reduction in scope, if not intensity: They are about property, which usually means money. Talk-show participants babble at length about "closure." Judge shows actively pursue it by reducing complex issues to what Marx called "the cash nexus."

In theory at least, a judge represents the state. Just what jurisdiction the broadcast jurists are in is not so clear. And this ambiguity makes for quite a bit of authoritarianism—latent and blatant. As master of the courtroom, the judges guide the witnesses' sometimes meandering testimony back to relevance. Keeping litigants from interrupting one another is a constant problem. (This is distinct from the talk-show's discursive *laissez-faire*.) Most episodes reach a moment of crisis—the point when order has collapsed one time too many, and the judge must assume an "I Am the Law" posture. This mostly involves yelling.

Indeed, there is a tendency in these shows to personalize justice. "In his courtroom," as the announcer for *Judge Joe Brown* says, "everyone has the right to a fair trial. But if they're proven wrong, he has the right to *make them pay!*" Actually, Joe Brown is fairly conscientious about explaining the rationale behind his decisions—while publicity materials for *Judge Judy* stress the great speed and decisiveness of her rulings.

Which brings us back to *Judge Mills Lane* and the case of the separated lesbians. Their dispute was not, as such, that exciting. (Hearing people discuss a timeshare never is). And it ended peaceably: Lane rendered a verdict that seemed to leave the ex-lovers as happy as could be under the circumstances. "It's simply an economic transaction!" he then announced with a strange note of urgency.

Of course, it was more than that. The emotional entanglement between the women was something he could not understand—nor approve, it seems, given how quickly he rushed off to his chambers. In the format of a talk show, he would have been encouraged to express every thought bouncing around his bald head. Then they could have yelled at him, and at each other, and he back at them; all of which would have been spontaneous and very sincere. Instead, Lane acted as if his role obliged him to follow the spirit and letter of the law—and even to behave in a civil manner, so far as he was able. That is not much, yet it shows some judgment. ■





HERE COMES THE JUDGE

BY SCOTT MCLEEMEE

It is fair to say that the lesbians made Judge Mills Lane uncomfortable. I would need to find the videotape to be sure. Yet it did seem that the judge made only the most fleeting eye contact with the women, who were suing one another over the rights to a timeshare they had purchased together. That was in a happier time. But true love ended where it so often does: in a courtroom.

Or rather, a television studio made to look like one, complete with an American flag, judicial bench and bailiff. This is the basic setting common to all "the judge shows"—which have become so common as to constitute a new TV genre. The formula was established in the early '80s with *The People's Court*. (The title always sounded like one of those strange French Maoist undertakings Jean-Paul Sartre used to get involved in.) The formula is simple—real cases, real people and a real judge in a simulated small-claims court. The voyeuristic appeal is enormous.

At first glance, the shows are indistinguishable—except for the jurists themselves, who are of diverse colors, though all appear to be in their fifties or sixties. They are all, in their own ways, crusty and blunt. "Judge Judy" (the only female on the TV bench) often reminds litigants that she is not dumb; she is, in fact, smart—so knock it off with the prevarication. But for sheer overblown folksiness, no one can compete with Lane, who resembles Ross Perot in his more lucid intervals.

Although Lane passed the bar, and even has served as a judge, he brings a more useful qualification to the job. For Lane was also the prize-fight referee who ruled that Mike Tyson should not have bitten off an opponent's ear. (As the

opening voiceover says: "In the ring and in the courtroom, he's fair—and he's firm.") Lane throws himself into the process with enthusiasm. He announces the start of a trial with his referee's catchphrase: "Let's get it on!"

On the day that the lesbian ex-couple entered his court to litigate control of their joint property, Lane did not begin the show with "Let's get it on!" Nor was he quite as salty as usual. He listened intently to the women—meanwhile studying some important papers in front of him—and then rendered a verdict. And you couldn't help noticing that, afterward, he fled the courtroom.

It was a moment that revealed—for good and for bad—the implicit politics of the judge shows, which, examined in context, look very ambiguous indeed.

As of mid-1999, in some TV markets anyway, there were at least four hours of programming in this format each weekday. Most of the shows have debuted in the past three years. And in keeping with the prime directive of television creativity—"find something that works, then beat it to death"—more new judge shows will go on the air this fall. At present these programs are broadcast during the morning and afternoon. The audience thus consists of parents with very small children, older kids playing hooky, college students, the unemployed, telecommuters and those suffering from chronic depression.

An old sociological term for us—uh, them—is *anomic*. Anomic people have fallen out of the routine patterns of social existence. Still, the anomic have money, or at least some do;

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